

1945

The common schools of Stafford.

Earl M. Witt

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/theses>

Witt, Earl M., "The common schools of Stafford." (1945). *Masters Theses 1911 - February 2014*. 2707.
Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/theses/2707>

This thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses 1911 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.



FIVE COLLEGE
DEPOSITORY

THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF STAFFORD

WITT - 1945

ARCHIVES
THESIS

M
1945
W827

THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF STAFFORD

by

EARL M. WITT

A Problem submitted as part
of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Science

MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGE, AMHERST

May 1, 1945

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	III-V
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	VI
THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF STAFFORD	VII
FOUNDATION STONES	1
Connecticut Colony Code	1
"Schooles"	2
Revision of the Code	3
A NEW TOWN EASTWARD OF ENFIELD	5
Conditions of Settlement	5
600 Acres for the Hartford School	6
The Broad Street	8
The First School	9
THE RISE OF THE DISTRICTS	11
Schism and Division	11
Growth and Division	14
Twilight of the Ecclesiastical Period	16
The School Fund	17
The Standish Fund	18

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
FROM THE THREE R'S TO THE RULE OF THREE	20
Educational Materials	20
SCHOOL SOCIETY PERIOD	23
Turnpikes	25
Early Industries	25
Kent Hollow	25
A New Building	28
Henry Barnard	31
Webber District	33
TOWN CONTROL	37
Webber District Expires	41
DISTRICT NO. 12, FIRST SOCIETY	48
DISTRICT NO. 13, FIRST SOCIETY	50
HYDEVILLE	51
NEW FURNACE OR STAFFORDVILLE	53
HALL DISTRICT	55
FURNACE HOLLOW	58
WEST STAFFORD CENTER	60
STAFFORD VILLAGE OR LEONARD	63
ROCKWELL HILL	65

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LULL OR ZICLAG	66
SQUARE POND DISTRICT	66
PATTEN DISTRICT	67
THE WORKS DISTRICT	68
WASHBURN OR ORCUTTVILLE	68
CROW HILL DISTRICT	70
FOXVILLE DISTRICT	72
THE SPRINGS DISTRICT	76
SECONDARY EDUCATION	78
Willard's School	78
A School of Higher Grade	80
Springs and Foxville Unite	85
The First High School Building	86
THE BATTLE FOR CONSOLIDATION	91
BIBLIOGRAPHY	98-102
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	103

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHARTS

	Page
ENUMERATION 1831 to 1899	89
POPULATION 1830 to 1890	90

FIGURES

TURNPIKES	24
THE DISTRICTS	46
DIVISION OF THE WEBBER DISTRICT	43

PHOTOGRAPHS

NATHAN HALE SCHOOL	9a
WEST STAFFORD CENTER SCHOOL	61
STAFFORD VILLAGE OR LEONARD SCHOOL	64
WASHBURN SCHOOL	69
STAFFORD HIGH SCHOOL	87

THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF STAFFORD

The Common Schools of Stafford is an attempt to trace the development of the school system of a Connecticut town from its founding in 1718 until all of its district schools were consolidated in 1899.

The town, large in area and rugged in terrain, had at one time twenty school districts, each having its own school. Where these districts were, when and where their various school houses were built is not a matter of public record. An effort has been made to compile this information.

Stafford was chosen because the writer is familiar with it and is aware that little is known of its early educational history. In fact there does not appear to be much literature on the educational history of many Connecticut towns. This paper has been prepared in the hope that it may be a contribution to the educational history of the state and of assistance to others who may make similar studies.

FOUNDATION STONES

The public school system of the State of Connecticut had its beginnings in the schools established by the first settlers in the several towns. The earliest records of some of these towns have disappeared, but those in existence probably give a correct idea of the actions in the rest of the towns.

The records of New Haven under date of Feb. 25, 1639 imply that there was a school there less than two years after the arrival of the settlers. In 1642 a vote was passed setting up a free school and subsequent records show that the school was continued.

The early records of Hartford are not available but a town meeting of April 1643 orders "that Mr. Andrews should teach the children in the school one year . . . that he shall have for his pains £ 16.

In May 1650 the Connecticut Colony adopted a code in which the following provisions for education were made:

"For asmuch as the good Education of Children is of singular behoofe and benefitt to any Common wealth, and whereas
 CONNECTICUT many parents and masters are too indulgent and
 COLONY CODE negligent of their duty in that kinde:- It is
 therefore ordered by this Courte and Authority thereof, That
 the Selectmen of every Towne, in the severall precentcs and
 quarters where they dwell, shall have a vigilant eye over
 their brethren and neighbors, to see first, that none of

them shall suffer so much Barbarisme in any of their families as not to endeavor to teach by themselves or others their Children and Apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue, and knowledge of the Capitall Lawes, upon penalty of twenty shillings for each neglect therein; Allso, that all Masters of families doe once a weeke at least, catechise their children and servants in the grounds and principles of religion; and if any bee unable to doe so much that then at the least they procure such Children or Apprentices to learne some shorte orthodox catechisme . . . And further, that all Parents and Masters doe breed and bring up their Children and Apprentices in some honest lawfull (calling) labor or employment, either in husbandry, or some other trade proffitable for themselves and the Common wealth, if they will not nor cannott traine them up in Learning to fitt them for higher employments." . . .

"It being one chiefe project of that old deluder Sathan, to keepe men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in

former times keeping them in an unknowne tongue,
"SCHOOLES"

so in these latter times by perswading them from the use of Tongues, so that at least the true sence and meaning of the originall might bee clouded with false glosses of saint seeming deceivers; and that Learning may not bee buried in the Grave of our Forefathers, in Church and Common wealth, the Lord assisting our indeavors;- It is therefore ordered by this Courte and Authority thereof, That every Towneshipp within this Jurissdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders shall then forthwith appoint one

within their Towne to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read, whose wages shall be paid either by the parents or masters of such children or by the Inhabitants in generall by way of supply." . . .

"And be it further ordered that where any Towne shall increase to the number of one hundred families or housholders, they shall sett up a Grammer Schoole, the masters thereof being able to instruct youths so farr as they may bee fitted for the University. And if any Towne neglect the performance hereof above one yeare, then every such Towne shall pay five pounds per Annum to the next such Schoole, till they shall perform this order." (1)

In 1655 a school code was adopted in the New Haven Colony.

In 1665 the two colonies Hartford and New Haven were united under the King Charles Charter which had been granted in 1662.

The Connecticut Code was completed in 1672 which omitted the requirement of a grammar school in each town and instead required one in each county town.

"And it is further ordered, That in every County Town there shall be set up and kept a Grammar School
"REVISION OF THE CODE" for the use of the County, and Masters thereof being able to instruct Youths so far as they may be fitted for the Colledge." (2)

In 1700 the laws of the colony were revised and two important changes were made in the provisions for schools.

- (1) State Bd. of Educ. Report 1876 page 93
(2) Ibid 95

The first provided "that in every town having 70 or more Householders . . . shall be constantly provided of a sufficient School Master to teach the Children and Youth to read and write; and towns having less than 70 should maintain a school for one half of the year."

A NEW TOWN "EASTWARD OF ENFIELD"

The official history of Stafford as a town begins in October, 1718 when Thomas Kimberly, a surveyor of Hartford County, with a committee of three men laid out the township. There were settlers or squatters in Stafford before that time. These people were probably settled here by Major James Fitch who claimed title to this territory, his claim being based on the will of Joshua, Sachem of the Mohegans. It is difficult to say accurately whether Fitch's Claim was a just one or not, but after considerable controversy with the colony Fitch relinquished his claim, and the General Assembly in May, 1718 resolved: "That a town be forthwith, or as soon as may be, laid out, of the Contents of seven miles square, to be laid out eastward of Enfield."

On November 29, 1718 a "Committee authorized and empowered by the General Court . . . for the Granting and

CONDITIONS OF Managing sd township of Stafford" met here
SETTLEMENT and fixed the location of Stafford Street
and determined the following conditions of settlement:

"The conditions and regulations upon which the Settlerers and Inhabitants admited by the Committee are to have two hundred acres of Land a peace in the Town of Stafford as Declared by the Committee at their metting in said Town of Stafford November 29, 1718 first that every such settler shall pay unto the committee seven pounds in good bills of credit at on or before the fiveteenth Day of may next

Insuing 2-ly that within two years next comeing every setteler admitted in sd Town shall build a dweling house upon the lott assigned to him by the committee not less then six foot square with a chimney space and not less then six foot between Joynts 3-ly That every such setteler shall continue in said Town as a setteled Inhabitant three year from and after the Expiration of This sd Two years and allso within the sd Three years Being In whole five years from the above Date pay their Respective pearts and proportions of all Town School and ministerial Charges within sd Town shall be agreed upon by the Majger pearte of sd Settlers To Be paid for Either or any of the sd Ends or uses." (3)

It is interesting to note that school charges were placed before ministerial in the list. Unfortunately for us the number of references in the town records relating to schools are not nearly so numerous as those relating to the ministry.

The next reference to schools is in the town patent or charter granted in 1729. " . . . seven miles square and 600 600 ACRES FOR THE HARTFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL acres over which 600 acres is herein excepted it being Laid out in ye northwest corner of said township of Stafford . . . for ye use of ye school in ye county of Hartford." (4)

Money received from the sale of unsettled lands in those days often found its way into the coffers of Yale College or to the support of schools in some other way.

(3) L.R. Vol 3 page 255

(4) L.R. Vol 1 page 1 ff

The avails from the sale of this 600 acres of land went to aid the Latin Grammar School at Hartford, now the Hartford Public High School, as the following will indicate. In 1672 a law had been passed requiring that a grammar school should be maintained in each of the then established counties. Hartford and New Haven already had such schools; New London and Fairfield had not established such schools. In the same year each of these county towns was granted 600 acres of land "for the benefitt of a grammer schoole in the sayd County Townes." (5)

The land was not laid out at once, since we find in 1702 commissioners appointed "to lay out to the county townes 600 acres of land granted them May the 9th 1672" and it was some years after this that the land was finally laid out. (6)

On June 14, 1776, William Pitkin, George Wyllys, Jesse Root, and others petitioned the General Assembly, stating "they are a committee of the . . . grammar school in sd Hartford. . . . That there is a tract of land situate in Stafford County of Hartford containing about five hundred acres . . . That the . . . now have an opportunity to dispose of the same for the use of sd school which might be beneficial not only to sd school but to sd Town of Stafford and the

(5) State Board of Education Report 1875 page 125

Note--The land received by the colony from the sale of Stafford was used to build the State House at Hartford. Col. Records Vol. 6 Page 91

Note--A survey made by Nathaniel Burnham dated April 4, 1725 of 600 acres of land laid out to Hartford, their school grant was read and approved by this assembly and ordered to be entered on the record. Col. Records Vol. 6 Page 548

(6) State Board of Education Report 1875 page 125

public in general They therefore pray your . . . to authorize and empower the memorialists to give proper deed of sale of sd land to the purchasers so that sd land may in the future be subject to all taxes of a public nature . . . "

"In the lower house

The prayer of this memorial granted

(a) Test Titus Hosmer - Clerk"

"Concur in upper house

(a) Test George Wyllys - Clerk" (7)

Returning now to Stafford, the early settlers expected Stafford Street to be the Main Street and Civic Center of THE BROAD the town.as, indeed it was, for about 100 STREET 1719 years.

It was laid out 20 rods wide to provide a common or green. Here the early churches were built; here the military companies were drilled; (8) and here the settlers allowed their stock to graze on the common domain. Twenty-two home lots of fifty acres each were laid out along the sides of the "Broad Street", and ten more were laid out on the south side of the road to Ashford (now the Buckley Highway-Route 15). "Also twenty grants in other from the still-to-be-built meeting house." (9)

Due to the size of the town and its rugged topography, provision was made in early times for the establishment of a second church. In 1726, 100 acres of land were laid out

(7) Archives Schools and Colleges Vol. 2 page 38 State Library Note--Among the land that went to Yale College was the territory Connecticut in 1713 History of Connecticut. Sanford page 110ff

(8) Colonel John Foster is said to have drilled a company

(9) Grobel page 7

in the western part of the town for the benefit of the ministry. (10) Possibly this is the land referred to in the boundaries of the Webber District as the "ministry lot"

At a Town Meeting, December 11, 1721, they "Voted to go on to build a meeting house as fast as may be with conuenency . . ." It was not completed until several years later. "This building was for thirty or forty years the only meeting house in Stafford and the place where all the Town Meetings were held during that time." (10)

Careful search has failed to reveal any documentary evidence, but, unquestionably, the first school established
THE FIRST and the first school building erected was
SCHOOL located on Stafford Street.

The earliest building of which any information can be secured was probably built before 1800. "The school house in those days (11) showed signs of the battering storms of the elements around. It stood on the eminence from which nearly every dwelling in the district can be seen. It for a long time outrivalled the church in that it had a cupola and a bell, and a chimney at each end; it had its cracks and crevices, and it also stands as a remnant of what old school houses look like!" (12)

Later a building on Stafford Street was erected about 1883. It has now been moved across the road and is used as

(10) Ibid page 17

(11) Reference is a bit indefinite as to time but could not have been later than 1821. Cole page 500

(12) Cole page 500



NATHAN HALE
SCHOOL HOUSE
NEW LONDON

A resident who has seen the old
Stafford Street School states that it was
very similar to the Nathan Hale School,
except that the Street School was much
larger.

a dwelling. (13) The Report of School Visitors for that year says, "Our best wish for the new building is that it may endure as long and be as useful as the gambrel roofed structure worn and shattered by countless storms and whittled by the jackknives of as many boys still standing nearby sacred to the memory of many generations." (14) The gambrel roofed structure stood a few rods north of the later building and was built against the wall bounding the Street on the east side. The foundations can still be seen.

(13) L. R. Vol. 73 page 557

(14) Report of the Board of School Visitors 1883-4 page 1

THE RISE OF THE DISTRICTS

The inhabitants of the western part of the town were some distance removed from the Church on Stafford Street when one considers the mode of travel of those days and particularly the condition of the roads in the winter months.

In 1749 the general assembly gave its consent to the setting up of a separate Military Company in the part of the town west of the "Willimantick" river. (15) Two years later (1751) a group from West Stafford petitioned the General Court for relief from church taxes. "They assert that there were then 40 families (180 souls) in the west half of Stafford." (16)

The town presented a counter petition to the effect that they

were having difficulty supporting the one church

SCHISM AND on Stafford Street. The General Court compromised
DIVISION

and granted them relief from church taxes from December 1st to March 31st of each year. In 1761 the town, with the approval of the General Court, set off the western part of the town as a separate parish. For many years this was known as the Winter Parish, the name no doubt, arising from the fact that the inhabitants were at first permitted to have their own church services during the winter months.

(15) Col. Records Vol 9 page 464

(16) Grobel page 35

Note-"From 1742--1797 the majority of legal voters in each town and church parish had been clothed with full power to lay taxes and make all the necessary arrangements in regard to the establishment and support of schools. The selectmen in each town containing but one ecclesiastical society, and a committee of each parish, when there were more than one, were empowered to manage all lands and funds belonging to the town or society for the benefit of schools."

Hollister 2 page 571

Stafford now had two ecclesiastical societies or parishes. Heretofore, the town had been the ecclesiastical society. At first these were merely districts or subdivisions of the town as far as school affairs were concerned, but in 1798 they supplanted the town entirely in school affairs. Over a period of years (1712-1798) the parishes were given statutory authority to choose clerks and committees, to levy taxes and were required to have at least "one good and sufficient school (17) in every parish.

We have seen that the first school in Stafford was undoubtedly on Stafford Street. Where the next schools were or the next schoolhouses were built we do not know. We have one clue from the so called "Western Lands Fund." In 1733 the General Court ordered the land sold, which today comprises seven townships in the northwestern part of the state and money to be divided among the then settled towns. This money was to be kept as a permanent fund, the income to be used for the support of the schools.

(17) Code of 1750

Note The important place held in school affairs by the parishes or ecclesiastical societies requires explanation. The early towns were often extensive in territory and as fast as separated sections were sufficiently settled and the inhabitants were financially able to support a minister they petitioned for the privileges of a separate society or parish. This was purely for religious purposes but the parishes were soon found to be desirable units for school management. Many of these parishes were later set off as separate towns. West Stafford petitioned the General Assembly to be set off as a separate town in 1844.
L.R. Vol. 20 page 262

The first reference we have to this money is as follows-
 At a town meeting held in Stafford on February 24, 1746/7,
 Lieutenant Warner was chosen moderator . . . "Voted to choose
 a committee namely Eleazer Hammond, David Orcutt & Moses Royce.
 Voted to give the above mentioned committee power to c--l (call)
 the former committee to account concerning the School Money
 Granted the Town of Stafford and to sew (?) for and recover
 sd money Both the principal and interest and to Discharge the
 former commtt and to put the money to the best advantage for
 the Towns Benefit & dispose of the same according to the intent
 of the General Assembly." (18)

The second reference to this money was in the record of
 a town meeting in 1750. Evidently the committee appointed had
 recovered the money and the interest, since the next record we
 have of this money is as follows-

"At a town meeting held in Stafford on February 4th day 1750 . . .
 At this meeting voted that the west pearte of the town have
 their proportion of the interest of the School Money according
 to what their list draws." Inserted above the words Money to
 draws are the following words "in case they set up school amongst
 themselves." "Voted to take out of the Interest of the School
 money so much as to make the principal two hundred pounds." (19)

Note--"Whereas there is laid before this Assembly one bond from
 William Roberts and Samuel Roberts . . . Arising or becoming
 due for the sale of the western lands and ordered for the sup-
 port of the schools in this Colony; This Assembly orders 168
 6S OD thereof to be to the town of Stafford for their part of
 said money"

Colonial Records Vol. 8 page 479 (May 1742)

(18) L.R. Vol. 3 page 15

(19) L.R. Vol. 3 page 19

By implication, at least, this vote would indicate there was only one school in the town, and that a school in the western part of the town was being contemplated. (20)

The petition relating to church taxes presented 3 years before by the inhabitants of the western part of the town mentioned 40 families living in that area. It would appear that this was a sufficient number to maintain a school.

As the census of the State in 1756 indicates that Stafford had a population of 1000 persons, undoubtedly several schools were established during the early years.

With the setting off of West Stafford as a separate parish in 1761 and the opening of additional schools in the town, we have the beginnings of the district system in Stafford. The

establishment of school districts for maintaining

GROWTH AND schools was first permitted by law in 1766,
DIVISION although in some towns it was in effect at an
earlier date, i.e. Windsor, 1723. (21)

As parts of the town became sufficiently populous, they held meetings, elected officers, established district boundaries, and proceeded to "set" a school. No records of these proceedings have been preserved.

(20) "At a town meeting held at Stafford Jan. 6, 1778 . . . voted that the monies belonging to this town for the sale of the Western Lands be divided Between the Societies according to their lists for the futu (r)" L R Vol. 5 page 4.

(21) State Board of Education Report 1876 page 97.

In some instances the districts were established before 1800. The Webber District, District Number 7, West Parish established its boundaries in 1797. "Then south to the North Line of the Ministry lot (so called) it being the North Line District Number 2." (22) It would be interesting to know whether the districts were numbered in the order in which they were established and their boundaries defined or what method was used. The above would seem to indicate that District #2 preceded Number 7. Possibly they were all established at about the same time, each ecclesiastical society dividing its territory into school districts.

While Stafford was growing in population and settling its ecclesiastical affairs, other developments were taking place. The mineral springs were becoming famous and attracting a great many noted people here in search of health. The presence of bog iron ore was known or suspected very early in the town's history (23), but it remained for the Revolution to bring it into prominence. The first furnace was erected in 1779 (24) and made cannon and cannon shot for the Colonial Army. (25) A second furnace was started in 1796 at Staffordville which was then called New Furnace, since the first furnace had been at Furnace Hollow.

(22) Boundaries of the 3rd School District, W.P. (Webber) as established in 1797. District Record Book-inside front cover.

(23) In 1734 James Renals and others entered into an agreement to carry on a furnace on Milriver (probably Middle River). This agreement recorded in L.R. Vol. 1, page 498, refers to a Furnace partly built. L.R. Vol. 1 page 501-2 Records of options secured by Renals.

(24) Gazateer of Conn. and R. I. page 299

(25) Colonial Records Vol. 2 page 512

Many and profound changes were taking place in the colony during this period of ecclesiastical or parish control. Communicants of other churches were appearing throughout the state in increasing numbers. There was objection to the tax for the support of the established church from people who wished to attend another church, in some, cases, for less honorable reasons. (29)

In 1745 Stafford made its first exception in favor of the dissenters by voting "that if the Churchmen" (church of England) "Bring a receipt from their minister the Colector may cross their rats" (30) (rates or church tax). This was annulled at the next town meeting--possibly because they were afraid these receipts would be returned to England, and trouble would ensue)

This "increasing number of dissenters in the state who demanded a right to vote on school affairs were automatically excluded from the ecclesiastical society which had the schools in charge." (31) "School masters were as orthodox in politics as in religion, even the textboods were Federalist in tone." (32) The fact that Stafford Street was referred to as "Federal Hill" gives a clue as to the feelings in Stafford.

(29) F. L. Batchelder . . . "We First find a few Baptists joining with unconverted men of all principles and of no principle in a so-called Baptist Society, the grand object of which was to escape paying parish taxes."

Batchelder, Rev. F. L.

(30) Grobel page 29

(31) James page 114

(32) Furcell page 202

The Constitution of Connecticut was adopted in 1818, and three years later a school code appeared. Under the provisions of this code "school funds were apportioned on the basis of the number of children of school age (4-16), not on the basis of taxable wealth." (33)

In May 1793 the General Assembly appointed a committee to dispose of the Western Reserve, and in October an act was passed establishing the money received from the sale as a perpetual fund. The income from this fund was appropriated to the ecclesiastical societies of the state (of all denominations) to be used by them "for the support of their respective ministers . . . and schools of education." (34) The passage of this act produced such a heated controversy that the sale of the lands west of Pennsylvania was postponed. It was finally

THE SCHOOL FUND agreed in 1795 that the income should be paid to the several societies of the state for the support of schools, to be kept according to law. This act created the School Fund. Doubtless the dissenters from the established church and the controversy over the School Fund had an important bearing on the fact that in 1798 we find the term "ecclesiastical" dropped from the statutes relating to schools and the word "school" substituted.

(33) James page 114
 (34) Law of 1793

The control of the schools was then vested in the School Societies and "the secularizing of the schools conducted by the new School Societies was entirely devoid of either civil or ecclesiastical affiliation" (35) This newly created body was to manage the schools, while the support was to come from a permanent fund, i.e. the School Fund.

Voluntary Contributions and endowment funds for the aid and support of the local common schools were not unusual in these early days. One of these is the Standish
 STANDISH FUND Fund. After the death of Eleazer Standish, a document purporting to be his last will and testament was offered for probate in the Hartford Probate Court. This will contained the following bequest:

"Item, I give and Bequethe the use of my housing and hom Loot and Reae Loot, being about eighty-five acres after the Death of my said sister Ichadan Standish for the use of scool to the first Society in Stafford forever the use to be anually Laid out for a Scol in said society acording to the Directions of the sivel Athority and selectmen in said society for the Time Being."

"The sister, Ichadan Standish, died in 1768." (26)

Note-In 1799 the first apportionment of interest was made from the school fund. At first the money was distributed on the basis of the number of Polls and the ratable real estate, i.e. the wealthier societies received the greater amounts of money.
 (35) Steiner page 35
 (26) Report-Town of Stafford 1918. page 39

"On Sept. 5, 1888 The Selectmen (27) of the Town of Stafford leased property left by the will of Eleazer Standish for the support of school in First Society for term of nine hundred and ninety-nine years for two hundred and ten pounds and agreement to pay "one pepor corn per annum payable on the fifth day of September annualy if required." (28)

(27) See footnote at bottom of page L.R. Vol. 5 page 329
(John Phelps Selectman, to Zenas Alden)

(28) Report-Town of Stafford 1940. Page 13

FROM THE THREE R'S TO THE RULE OF THREE

We can only surmise as to Stafford's first school. The town probably had the necessary seventy families within a few years after the town was laid out. If the law was obeyed (and in many cases, in those days, it was not) a school was established when this number was reached. Since the town had no public building suitable for a school, it was probably held in a home. Some mother, perhaps, who had enjoyed the benefits of more than an ordinary education, took the children of the neighborhood into her home for instruction. Since some of the early settlers lived at some distance from the street it would have been impossible for their children to attend school there thus, their education was received from their parents until such time as there were enough families within a reasonable distance to establish a school of their own.

We have seen that the colony laws required that children be taught to read and write, learn the catechism, and be brought up in some gainful employment. It is interesting to speculate on the educational program of one of these schools. Judged by today's standards it would seem very limited and extremely crude.

There was little in the way of educational material with which to carry on a program. As text books were few in number EDUCATIONAL probably many of the children had none. Black-MATERIALS boards, maps, and globes were, of course, unknown in those schools.

In a letter to Henry Barnard, written in 1840, Noah Webster says, "When I was young, the books used were chiefly or wholly, Dilworth's Spelling Books, the Psalter, Testament and the Bible." To this list, could perhaps be added, the New England Primer, (36) which was in use about the time Stafford was settled. This contained the catechism, in which even the memory verses that accompanied the ABC's had a Biblical flavor.

Z = Zaccheus did climb a tree
His Lord for to see.

That children had a sense of humor in those days is shown by the rhyme with which they accompanied this--

"The Limb did break and Zaccheus did fall
And never saw his Lord at all.

As time went on, other text books came to use, and we find published in 1783 the Webster's Spelling Book, about 1786 Morse's Geography, and in 1799 an arithmetic called Dabol's Schoolmaster's Assistant.*

When these text books are examined it becomes apparent that memory played an important part. Everything was done according to a rule which was to be memorized. By constant drill the student probably learned to repeat the rule "parrot fashion," but one wonders if the average student ever understood the operation to be performed.

There were no grades or classes as we know them today. Children were divided into beginners, those learning their ABC's etc., and the advanced group, i.e., those who could read from the Bible without spelling out the words.

(36) Heartman

* Dabol was a student who studied Cocker's Arithmetic--Conn. Magazine Vol 4 page 71. Dabol was born in Groton, Morse in Woodstock and Webster in Hartford, Conn.

It was only in the winter months when there was no need for their help on the farm that the older students, especially the boys, were able to attend. A boy's common school education was not considered complete until he had mastered the "Rule of Three" (proportion) since this was a necessary "tool" for apprentices. The winter session was usually taught by a man referred to as "the master," and in many cases they were perhaps as much masters as teachers. The amount of teaching was seldom questioned if the school was orderly.

Rev. Heman Humphrey writing to Henry Barnard in 1860 (37) referring to his early education says, "Grammar was hardly taught at all, and that little was confined to learning and reciting the rules. Parsing was one of the occult sciences in my day."

Opportunity for higher education was limited to those whose parents could afford to have them tutored by the minister in preparation for college. In most cases they were "brought up in some lawful calling" by following in the footsteps of their fathers. Perhaps some were apprenticed to craftsmen here or in some other community; but for some time the opportunity for Stafford children was rather limited.

(37) First Century of National Existence page 368 ff
 Rev. Heman Humphrey--born in Simsbury, Conn. 1779
 Graduate of Yale and President of Amherst 1823-45

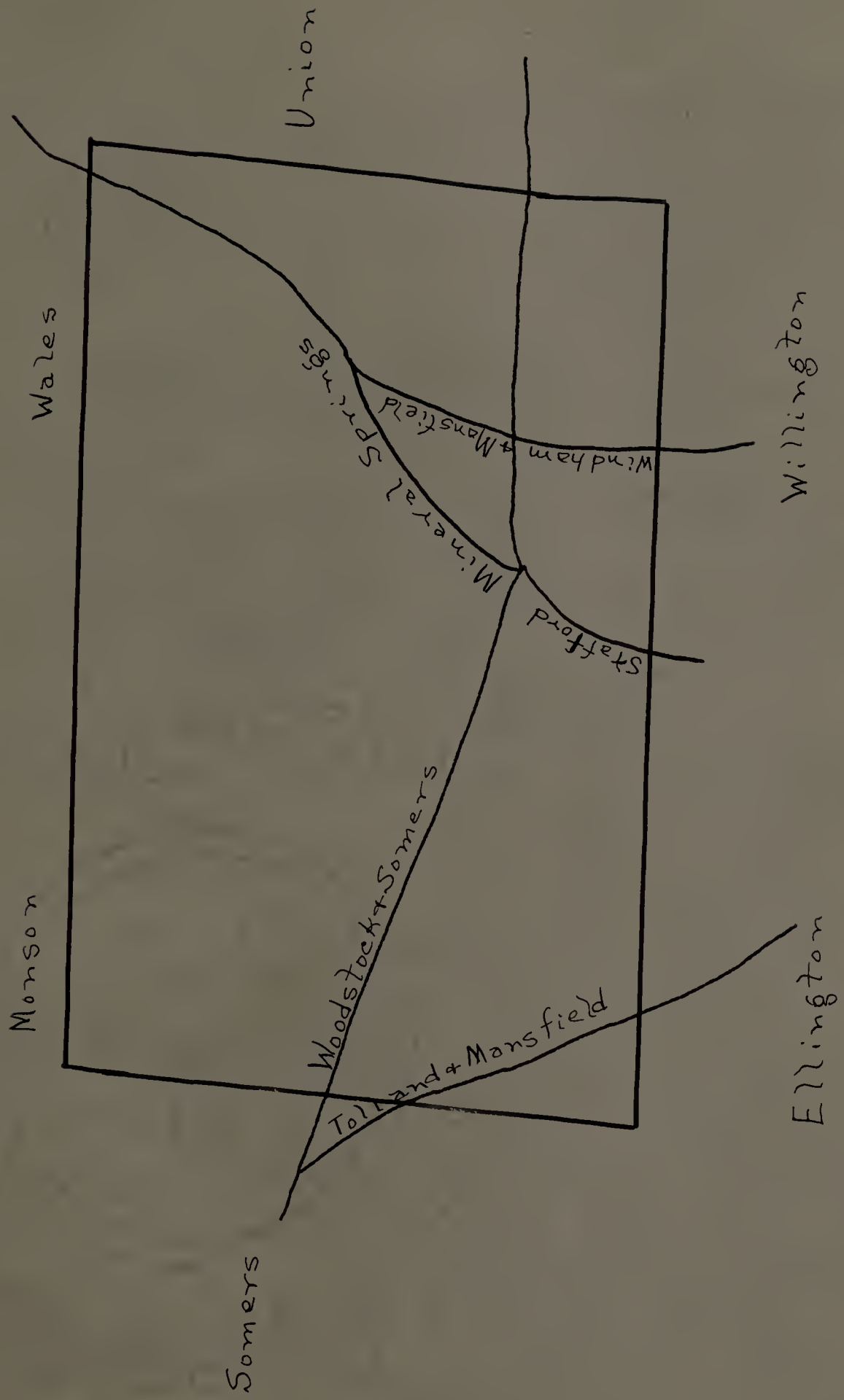
SCHOOL SOCIETY PERIOD

An Act of 1799 virtually codified the previous laws relating to schools, giving the authority formerly vested in the towns and ecclesiastical societies to the new school societies. These school societies, like the ecclesiastical societies, were in reality civil divisions of the town. Residents qualified to vote in town meeting were permitted to vote in society meeting on school affairs.

Each society was given power to "appoint a suitable number of persons, not exceeding nine, of competent skill in letters, to be overseers, or visitors of the school." (38)

County towns were no longer required to maintain grammar schools. Instead, there was a permissive act allowing towns, so disposed, to establish schools of a higher order. The tax of \$2 on each \$1000 of assessment was to be diminished as the returns from the School Fund increased and was to be abolished when the income reached \$62,000. As this amount was reached in 1821, there were no further taxes for the support of schools until 1854. The number of days school was to be maintained during the year was not specified. Since the support of the schools came from public funds, or from tuition fees levied on the parents, they were often closed when the public funds were exhausted.

(38) Public Acts of Connecticut



Turnpikes Which Passed Through Stafford

From Wood, Turnpikes Of New England

Many changes and developments were taking place in Stafford during this period. In 1803, the Stafford Pool Turnpike(39) was authorized by a special act of the
 TURNPIKES General Assembly. The incorporators were authorized to charge tolls on a road leading from the Tolland County Court House by the Mineral Springs to the Massachusetts line. This was to be of great value as an improvement to transportation, since it connected Stafford with other turnpikes, and, also, enabled people to visit the Mineral Springs more easily.

The furnaces continued to be the principal industry of the town until about 1825. The Gazetteer of Conn. and R.I. states.

EARLY "Besides the manufactures of iron, there are 2
 INDUSTRIES Cotton Factories, 1 Manufactory of Clocks, 3 Clothiers Works, 2 Carding Machines for Customers, 3 Tanneries, 6 Grain Mills, and 12 Saw Mills."(40) These were small industries scattered throughout the town on sites where water power was available. They were, however, the forerunners of the woolen industry which had its beginnings about 1839, and which was to have a profound effect on the history of the town and its schools.

The earliest school records available relating to any particular school began in this Society Period. They are the records

KENT of district meetings held in the Kent Hollow and
 HOLLOW Webber Districts in the West Parish. Since no other district records as early as these have been located, and

(39) Stafford Springs was called "The Pool."
 Private Laws of Connecticut, 1836. Page 1449.

(40) Gazetteer of Conn. and R.I. Page 299

since these are probably typical of all of the early schools we shall quote freely from them. The earliest meeting recorded is in the Kent Hollow Records, District #7 West Parish.(41)

"Stafford, October 25, 1830"

"At a school meeting, legally warned in District No. 7 in the 2nd School Society in Stafford, held at the school house in sd (said) district voted that Rufus Tupper should serve as Moderator and also choose Noah Patten clerk. Voted that wages should not exceed fifteen dollars per month. Voted that the public money should be expended the ensuing winter. Voted that school should begin monday after thanksgiving. Voted that each man should get half a cord of $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wood to the scholar. Voted that R.P.Wardwell should measure sd wood. Anson Spelman chosen auctioneer to sell the wood of those who do not get their wood to the lowest bidder. sold to Elizah Kent to be delivered to sd school house at one dollar per cord. said Kent to collect his money for getting the wood. it was Voted that sd Kent should not get wood for anyone till it was all gone except one cord. Voted that the place of putting school warning should be removed from L.T.Cadys door to Lotin Hildreths house on N.E. corner. Voted to dissolve the meeting. the meeting was dissolved. Attest Noah Patten Clerk"

(41) After the Webber District was divided in 1871 the Selectmen ordered the districts in the West Parish renumbered, district #1 in the West Parish number 12, and so on. There were at that time 11 districts remaining in the East Parish. District #7 in the W. P. became District #17.

Note* The spelling has not been altered in the quotations. In some cases punctuation has been added to improve the clarity. There is no punctuation in the original records.

"Stafford, April 29, 1831"

"A school meeting legally warned in District No.7 held at the school House in sd District in the 2nd Society in Stafford made choise of Ebenezer Wardwell Moderator and also chose Rufus Tupper Clerk. voted to have two months school this summer also voted to spend the Public money that was left last winter this summer voted that the Committee should hire as cheap as he can.

Voted to dissolve the meeting, the meeting was dissolved.

Attest Rufus Tupper, Clerk"

"July 11/13 1831"

"A school meeting legally warned in District No. 7 held at the School House in sd District in the sd Society in Stafford made choise of Ebenezer Wardwell Moderator and also chose Rufus Tupper clerk. voted that John Cady should serve as agent to collect the Public money that is in the hands of Elijah Kent voted to have the money apply on this summers school. voted that if there is any left to have it paid to the treasury. Voted to dissolve the meeting. The meeting was dissolved. Attest Rufus Tupper, Clerk"

The public money referred to was probably the income from the sale of the Western Reserve. It was paid to the treasure-
rs of the Parishes or School Societies in the town, and by
them divided among the several Districts. The State tax of \$2
on each \$1000 valuation had been abolished in 1820, and there
were no more state taxes for the support of schools during the
period of Society control

The page preceeding the following record is blank. It appears a meeting was held but no record of it was ever made in this book.

"At an adjourned Meeting of the 7th School District in the 2nd School Society of Stafford holden at the School House in sd District on Monday the first Day of August 1832. Anson Spellman was Chosen Clerk Pro Tem of sd. Meeting. Voted that sd District will build a school House on the Corner of the roads south of Eber Pattens near an Elm Tree Voted to build the building 22 feet long 18 feet wide 8 feet posts and do it off in the following manner: the roof shingled with good Chestnut shingles, the east and south sides Clapboarded with double stuff, the north and west sides with single stuff of this Country pine and all to be lined with $\frac{1}{2}$ boards. Sd house to be lighted with 7.24* and 1.12 lighted windows. The floor to be Double and of Oak. Sd house to be lath and plastered - good and durable Writing benches are to be made, and all of sd work to be done in a good Workmanlike Mahner by the 20th day of November 1832. Sd house to have a good open franklin stove and pipe worth fifteen dollars. Sd house to be built by the lowest bidder sd house to be done to the acceptance of a majority of the District but if the District and the contractor cannot agree then the District shall chose(an) indifferent person the contractor another, sd 2 indifferent persons shall chose the 3rd indifferent person who shall decide upon the matter

* Note 7.24 probably means 7 windows with 24 lights of glass.

Chose Eber Patten Vandue (vendue) Master. Anson Spelman being the lowest bidder the building of sd house was struck off to him. Voted that Anson Spelman shall build sd house for \$140. Voted to dissolve the meeting. The meeting was dissolved
Attest Anson Spelman Clerk"

Apparently the school house was built, but as the inhabitants of the district were not very prompt about paying their taxes it was necessary for Spelman to bring suit against the district in order to collect his \$140. The suit was settled amicably or at least out of court as there is no record of any judgement having been entered on the court records (42)

"August 23, 1832"

"Voted that Elijah Kent shall serve as agent to settle with Anson Spelman or defend a case now pending between sd district and Anson Spelman at Tolland. Voted that Rufus Tupper should collect a tax for building the school. Voted to commit all persons to Tolland gaol who do not pay their taxes.

Noah Patten Clerk"

The report of this meeting is followed by a financial statement

September 8, 1832

Rufus Tupper Dr.

To district No 7 in the second school society to part of a tax bill raised on list of 1830

Amount of tax bill 139.29

Crossed by A. Spelman 92.73 (43)

Remainder for Rufus Tupper to collect 46.56

(42) Tolland County Superior Court

(43) Crossed by A. Spelman i.e. paid to A. Spelman

At a meeting held January 29, 1833 the district acted on the matter of abating taxes. The district was the Board of Relief. Why some taxes were abated in part and some were abated entirely we do not know. Possibly part of some of the property of various inhabitants was in another school district.

"May 3, 1833"

"At a school meeting legally warned voted, that Isaac T Gady should serve as Moderator. Voted that there should be no work in time of School. Voted to three months school. Voted to begin the summer school the second monday in may. Voted to adjourn this meeting to the next friday at 6 P.M.

At an adjourned Meeting on May 10, 1833, voted that Elijah Kent should serve as Moderator Pro Tem Voted that the Committee should hire one to board themselves Voted to raise one cent on the dollar on the list of 1832 to pay for building the school house. Voted that it should be collected in 60 days. Voted that Elijah Kent should be the collector.

Noah Patten Clerk"

At the following meeting the vote of the previous meeting to collect a tax of one cent was rescinded and a tax of two cents was voted instead.

"March 17 1837"

Received of Austin Walbridge Esq. (44)

Thirty one dollars and fifty six cents for District No 7 \$31.56

Likewise nine dollars and five cents of Noah Patten Esq. 9.05

Paid Instructress and board thirty five dollars 35.00

5.61

(44) Austin Walbridge was probably Society Treasurer. The \$31.56 was the districts share of the state money

In 1837 three months of school was voted by the district with the choice of a male or female teacher left to the discretion of the Committee. Apparently a male teacher was chosen since the financial report of March 1838 states "paid instructor and board thirty dollars"

Evidently the attendance at District Meetings was not large, and the District was at times hard pressed to secure officers. The meeting held October 26, 1838 voted, A. Washburn, Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer. The following March \$38.51 was received of John Russell (45) and of this sum the instructor received \$30.00 for three months teaching of the winter school. In the same year the instructress received \$8.00 for two months of teaching in the summer school. The treasury was then left with a balance of one dollar and fifty cents, thirty-five cents of which was expended for a memorandum book and a broom.

Conditions such as these were the rule rather than the exception, not only in Stafford but in many parts of the state.

It was at this time that Henry Barnard was first
 .HENRY BARNARD
 elected to the legislature and became soon after the first State Superintendent of Connecticut Public Schools His Report to the Board (46) compiled from a survey and from his own observations made while visiting the common schools give a graphic picture of conditions

(45) In a later record John Russell is referred to as Society treasurer, i.e. Second Society or West Parish

(46) Report of the Commissioner of Common Schools 1839

Among those noted are the following--

1. Great variety of text books
2. Parents and Public indifferent
3. Low wages -- women at about \$6.00 (47) per month
and men at about \$14.00 per month
4. Many children not attending at all

The Board was abolished in 1842, and Barnard spent the next few years in Rhode Island. Connecticut's loss was Rhode Islands gain.

In 1845 a Committee appointed by the Governor reported to the General Assembly. This report was compiled from a circular sent to 214 School Societies. Fifty-nine replies were received, two of which were from Tolland County, but Stafford unfortunately for us was not one of these.

The complaints registered in this report are similar to those in Barnard's

1. Lack of uniform time for keeping school
2. Lack of interest in District affairs
3. Rapid turn over of teachers
4. Who will teach the cheapest and not who will teach the best (49)

(47) See Kent Hollow Financial Records of 1839

(48) Report of the Committee on Education May, 1845

(49) See record of the meeting in Kent Hollow April 29, 1831

At the end of the report is a list of text books used in the 59 Societies reporting. This list includes -- 40 readers, 14 geographies, 21 arithmetics and 9 spellers.

The lack of a requirement as to the length of the school term led some districts to close their schools when the public funds were exhausted. The following from the Webber District is an example. "Voted to have seven weeks school or as long a term of time as we could hire for what public money belongs to said District" (50)

There is little to vary the monotony of the records of Kent Hollow from 1840 to 1856. District officers were elected at the annual meetings, Three months of winter school was voted to begin the Monday after Thanksgiving. The summer session was usually of two months' duration and began about May first.

The following would indicate the Franklin stove purchased when the school was built in 1832 had apparently outlived its usefulness. "Voted to sell the Old Stove and get a new one" was the only business transacted at a meeting in 1840. Four years later it was voted "to have seven weeks school or as long as we could hire for what public money belongs to the district" In March 1849, \$22 was paid instructress for the winter term of 3 months and in September the teacher received \$24.44. No mention in either case is made of board so we do not know whether the teachers "boarded round" or not, presumably they did.

WEBBER Let us now turn to the records of the Webber District
DISTRICT

The first record we have states, "At a school meeting of the 3rd School District in the Second School Society

in Stafford, legally warned and held on the 20th day of March 1840:"Voted Libeus Washburn Moderator. Voted Richard Webber Clerk Pro Tem. Voted that the Committee hire a teacher to commence school the first Monday in next June. Voted to adjourn this meeting to Thursday the 26th instead at 6 o'clock P.M."

"March 26th met according to adjournment. Voted to make a thorough repair on the school house and also to build an addition for entry closet woodhouse 10 by 14 feet and 9 feet between joints. Voted to adjourn this meeting to April 30, 1840 at 6 o'clock P. M."

April 30, 1840, met according to adjournment. Voted to choose a committee of three to examine the school house to see what is necessary to make it comfortable and report. Voted Libeus Washburn, Richard Webber, Roswell Orcutt sd Committee Voted to adjourn this meeting to the last Tuesday in August 1840"

At the adjourned meeting in August they voted to rescind the vote to build an addition and instead"voted a $2\frac{1}{2}$ cent tax on the dollar to repair the building" and an additional tax sufficient to pay the assessors to assess the land of individuals belonging out of the district. Absentee landlords! They also"voted to dispose of the old stove" Following this business they held their annual meeting, elected officers, "voted $\frac{1}{3}$ cord of wood for each scholar to be furnished by his parents and to have 3 months of school starting the Monday after Thanksgiving.

The following year they voted to purchase the wood of "a sufficient quantity to support the fire during the continuance of the school." "voted to commence a school the first Monday in December to continue if the teacher gives general satisfaction and to expend the public money."

Something of the relative costs of those days can be judged by the fact that the contract for furnishing the wood was struck off to Calvin Knight in 1842 at 78 cents a cord, and the following year at 80 cents per cord.

The minutes of the meetings in this district do not indicate whether they had a summer session of the school or not. Annual meetings were held each year at which time the district officers were elected and the question of fuel was settled. The matter of a teacher was evidently left with the district committee, and either they had an unwritten rule regarding the length of the term or school was kept "as long as the public money lasted"

Repairs sometimes had to be made for in 1850 S.P. Babcock was elected a committee "to draw a paper to carry to each individual member of the district to sign for repairing the school house." We can only assume that, inasmuch as repairs were an expense to be borne by the district treasury, all the taxpayers had to be canvassed and their approval secured. In November 1851 a tax of 12 cents on the dollar was voted for this purpose. Apparently labor was scarce or the credit of the district was not considered good since several years elapsed before they were completed.

The School Society period "was the darkest period of education in Connecticut" (51) The embargo act and the War of 1812 had produced hardship and suffering in the state. The Connecticut school system which had stirred the admiration of other states was declining. There were several factors besides the national difficulties which were responsible for this situation.

The school Fund had produced apathy in various towns. The abolishing of the state tax in 1821 because of the increase in the income from this fund threw the burden of support onto the fund. Carelessness and a lack of responsibility among individuals locally responsible for the educational interests was engendered by the failure of the state to provide any continuous and systematic form of state supervision.

This unfortunate state of affairs was remedied somewhat by a law passed in 1854 (52) requiring a tax of one cent on the dollar for the support of schools.

(51) Dr. May Hall James in a letter to the author
August 17, 1944

(52) Action on this law was indefinitely postponed by vote of
the town meeting at Stafford, July 26, 1855
L.R. Vol 22

TOWN CONTROL

In 1856 the General Assembly enacted a law providing that "the several towns within this state shall provide for the support of common schools within their respective limits, and all debts, legal obligations--of any school society . . . shall remain in full force against the town." (53) Thus was the administration of the schools returned to the towns where it had originally been and where it has since remained.

Each town was required to elect a board of school visitors consisting of 3, 6, or 9 members, who were to oversee the schools of the community. (53)

At first the change of administration had little effect on the functioning of the schools. The districts retained a large measure of control over their schools. The quality of the school, and the condition of its building remained a district problem as the following records will indicate.

The record of a town meeting held October 6, 1856 voted 6 school visitors, Viz. Joseph Knight, J. R. Washburn, C. B. Biddle, Erastus Benton, F. L. Batchelder, William T. Talcott. (54) Moses B. Harvey was elected Treasurer of the School Fund. No mention is made of the fund received from the sale of the Western Lands, i. e. the money received in 1742.

The first mention of a "summer" school in the Webber District is found in the minutes of the April 10, 1857 meeting at

(53) Public Acts of Conn. 1856

(54) L. R. Vol. 22 Page 736

which time they voted to have a school during the ensuing summer of twelve weeks to commence at the discretion of the District Committee. "Voted to employ a female teacher whose wages shall not exceed two dollars per week and board. Voted to provide a permanent boarding place for the teacher if possible in one of the District families". This meeting also mentions certain equipment to be purchased at district expense. These include a chair, broom, water pail, dipper, and blackboard. Either the district was financially better off, or there were people with more interest in the schools than had been shown in previous years. It must have been the latter because at the December 1857 meeting the district voted a $2\frac{1}{2}$ cent tax to pay "old arrearages" for repairing the school house. At the same meeting a $2\frac{1}{2}$ cent tax was voted "for the purpose of defraying the expenses incurred for wood, wages of teacher and other expenses." This is the first district tax (mentioned in this book) voted for the purpose of paying the teacher's salary. Six months of school was voted in 1859 and 1860, but apparently sufficient money was not collected to pay the expenses since the meeting in 1861 voted to levy a tax to collect \$2.72 "to defray the expenses of last years school unless paid by subscription." (*) The records are not clear as to whether the 10 x 14 addition was ever constructed or not, but subsequent meetings ordered that the wood be stacked in the woodhouse so it evidently had been built.

(*) Subscriptions and voluntary contributions were quite common. In an account book of Miner Grant (Stafford Street) written about 1800 is found a history of contributions and among these is-- "Education Society" "\$16.00"

A portion of the record of 1862 is somewhat startling-
 "voted to build suitable outbuildings." The Kent Hollow
 records of 1862 are even more so-their warning of a meeting
 to be held, states in part, "to see if said District will set
 up a School the ensuing winter. Also to raise money to repair
 sd House and also to build a back House." (55)

"West Stafford Nov. 9, 1863 .

The persons recommended in the petitions are appointed to fill
 the said offices in Dist. 3 West Parish"

District Committee	Libeus Washburn
Clerk & Treasurer	Stephen F. Chaffee
Collector	Anson Spellman
Wood Measurer	Richard Webber

F. Bordon

Acting Visitor

S. F. Chaffee Clerk

West Stafford Sept. 6, 1864"

Why the district failed to elect its own officers we do
 not know unless, possibly, the troubles that were to cause the
 breaking up of the district were brewing.

The last meeting recorded in the book is dated Nov. 3, 1866.

- (55) The Report of the State Board of Education for 1865
 indicates Stafford had one school "without suitable out-
 buildings".
 The same table shows Tolland County having 127 buildings
 in all and of these 12 had no outbuildings. Andover and
 Union being the only town in which all schools were
 suitably equipped in this respect. State Board of Educ.
Report 1865 page 104 and 120

The following Treasurers Report of 1864 from the Kent Hollow records includes items not mentioned before

Treasurers Report 1864
(District #7)

March

20th Recd of State Fund	32.00
" " of Town Tax	11.72
" " Int Deposit Fund	<u>14.55</u>
Abatements from District Tax	
Paid from town Treasury	<u>23.00</u> 82.67
Recd of David Chase before in Treasury	<u>4.00</u> 86.67

The State Fund and Deposit Fund we have seen came respectively from the income of the Western Reserve sale and the income of the money deposited with the states by the Federal Government in 1836. The town tax was a tax of .3 of a mill for the support of schools required by a statute passed in 1860.

March 24th 1864

Paid teacher for winter term	60.00
" for repairs & C (etc)	1.58
Aug. 9 paid for teacher summer term	<u>24.00</u> 85.58
Balance in Treasury Sept. 20, 1864	1.09

L. S. Chaffee Treasurer

The annual meeting of 1864 fixed the summer and winter terms at 3 months each and fixed a rate of tuition of \$2 on each scholar attending, in addition to the usual wood for the stove.

In 1866 we find a similar vote except that the fee of \$2 is to be based on the "scholars enumerated in January last except

those of David Avery who did not attend the school."

In 1870 the law required that in districts enumerating 24 or more children the length of the school year should be at least 30 weeks. If less than 24 children were enumerated, school was to be kept at least 24 weeks. This is reflected in the Kent Hollow vote of Sept. 12, 1870 "voted to set up a winter school for a term as long as the law requires--to commence at the usual time," the "usual time" being the Monday after Thanksgiving "voted to furnish a half cord of wood to each scholar. Voted also that those sending from out of the District furnish the same quantity of wood." Probably those sending from out of the district were children from adjoining districts where no school was in session. No doubt, this refers to the people from the defunct Webber district.

The Webber district, in the very heart of the West Parish, at one time well populated with large families
 WEBBER DISTRICT
 EXPIRES had a thriving school, but with the changing conditions in the Parish and the town, their numbers grew smaller. The final meeting in their record book is dated 1866. If there was any school held there after that, no records of it exist, (56) but the Kent Hollow record of 1870 is the first note we have concerning its children having attended in some other district.

The Stafford Press of Dec. 1, 1870 tells part of the story of the district's difficulties. "The school house in the Webber District, West Stafford was burned last Friday night. A meeting

(56) Report of school visitors 1868 states no school in Webber during past year (1867)

was held early in the evening to see whether the district would vote to revive the school or sustain the action of a former meeting abandoning the school. The meeting sustained the former vote." The school report for that year throws further light on the situation. "The Webster District seems at last to have thoroughly solved the problem of further school. A very earnest effort seconded by the Acting visitor in the West Parish was made by some of the friends of the school in that district, to have a term last winter and thence regularly thereafter. School officers were appointed and a meeting held, which at an adjourned session voted not to set a school for the winter but to raise money for the purpose of holding religious or other meetings if desired. From the fact that two or three hours after this meeting adjourned, the school house and out buildings were reduced to ashes, we may infer something of the intensity of opposition felt and manifested to the project of resuscitation the school or of devoting the house to any other good use." (57)

Thus deprived of a School building the children must needs attend a neighboring district, the action taken in Kent Hollow in Dec. 1870 following the fire indicates they were accepted, "voted that the school be continued as it is, i.e. scholars coming from other districts have the privilege of still coming to said school. Also, voted that each scholar coming from other districts shall furnish $\frac{1}{2}$ cord of wood each and pay a sum of one dollar-or two dollars if they don't furnish wood."

(57) Report of School Visitors 1870

E to D 279 rods to Middle River

Map of the Division of the Webber District made March 17, 1917 from surveys made August 22, 1879. See Field Book No. 9, page 208 and pages 227 and 229

By E.Y. Fisk, C.E.

All that portion of the Webber District North of the line from B to C is set off to Lull District No. 15

B. Pile of stones the old District Line formerly the corner of Lull

All that portion of the Webber District West of the line A to B is set off to Kent Hollow

J. D. Hancock's Land

All that portion of the Webber District North of the Line C to D is set off to the Crow Hill District

All of that portion of the Webber District lying southerly and Easterly of the lines D, E, F, G, H, I, J, and K is set off to the Ashburn (Orcuttville) District No 6

All of that portion of the Webber District lying on the right of the main lines is set off to the West Stafford District No. 13 including J.D. Hancock's Land

DIVISION OF THE WEBBER DISTRICT

Adapted from a map on file in the Town Clerk's Office Maps and Surveys, Town of Stafford, Conn., Vol. I page 5A
The field books are now owned by Mr. G.R. Towne

Formerly the N line of the West Stafford District

Old Cemetary

New Cemetary

B

A

The people in Kent Hollow apparently foresaw what was ultimately to come to pass, since they also "voted to receive that portion of the Webber District which may hereafter be set off to District #7."

For some unknown reason a number of years was to elapse before the district was to be officially partitioned among the adjoining districts. At a town meeting held November 16, 1878, the town formally voted to abolish the Webber District and appointed the Selectmen and School Visitor of the West Parish, a Committee, to carry out the mandate of the meeting, that its territory be divided among the adjacent districts to assist them. The Committee engaged Mr. E. Y. Fisk who made a survey of the territory setting off various farms to the different districts. Mr. Fisk made his report to the Selectmen in September 1879 (58) together with a map showing the new boundaries.

On March 9, 1880 the General Assembly passed a special act validating the town's action. Just why this was necessary, we do not know. Possibly it was to guarantee for all time that the hatchet should remain buried and undisturbed.

Our story thus far has concerned itself with only three of Stafford's early schools. Schools that were first the "step child" of the church passed through a period of School Society

(58) Mr. George R. Towne gave the writer some of Mr. Fisk's papers relating to schools. Among these is a copy of his report to the Selectmen on which is the following note--"Jan- 1889 Town Clerk told me it was never acted on so the District was not divided." His report and his map, however, were recorded in 1917.

control and finally became the responsibility of the town again, keeping nevertheless a large measure of self-determination through the rather independent nearly autonomous district system.

When the control of the schools was returned to the towns where it had originally been, before the founding of Stafford, the law provided for the preservation of the School Society records of the town. (59) They were "to be deposited and forever kept" (60) with the records of the town. Old records have a way of being relegated to the attic and forgotten, ultimately falling into the hand of others to whom they are meaningless. If there are any Ecclesiastical or Society records relating to schools in existence none have been located. (61) With the exception of a few manuscripts the record books relating to four districts are all that are available today.

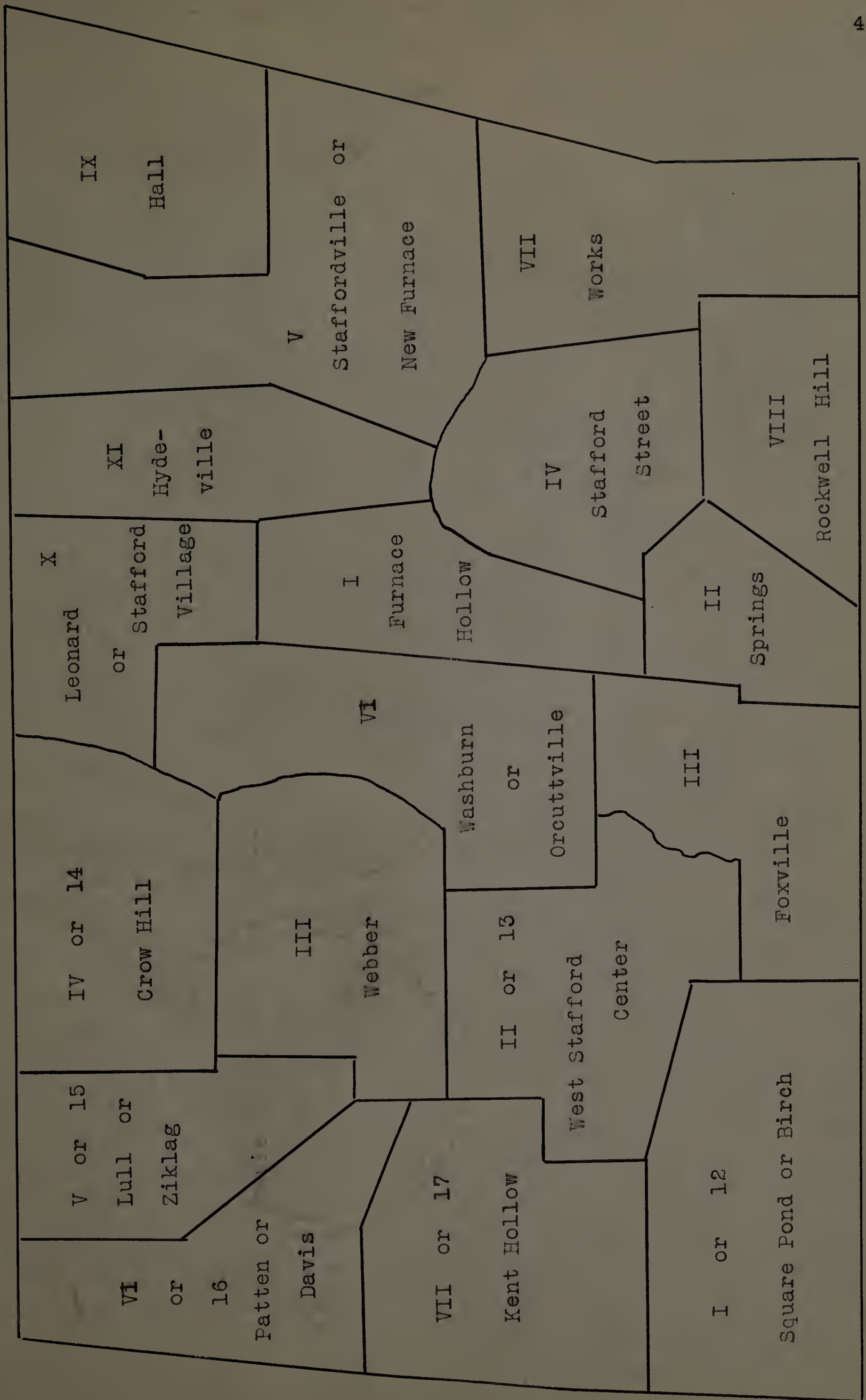
The printed reports of the Boards of School Visitors that have been found start in the year 1867. (62) Previous reports were probably verbal ones made in Society and Town Meeting. The Town Reports were printed some years before this date, but the information in them relating to schools is limited to a financial statement.

(59) From 1798 until 1856 the business of the schools had been transacted by the school societies of which there were two in Stafford

(60) Public Acts of Conn. 1856

(61) Dr. Leon Cash of Chester, Conn. wrote a doctoral dissertation on the Schools of the State under Society control and he tells me he was unable to locate any Society Records in Stafford

(62) The earliest reports are in the office of the Town Clerk at Stafford Springs



At one time there were thirteen school districts in the East Parish or First Society, and seven in the West Parish or Second Society. The majority of these were probably constituted by 1800 or soon after that date. One reference published in 1819 states "the civil divisions of the town are two located Ecclesiastical Societies or Parishes and 19 School Districts. (63) There is a primary or common school maintained in each of the School Districts."

The town meeting records indicate the names of "highway surveyors" who were in charge of road work in various districts in the two parishes. These would appear to have been the same territory as comprised the various school districts and the older residents confirm this belief. (64) An analysis of these indicates there were 13 districts in the East Parish and seven in the West Parish until 1852. After that date only eleven appear in the First Parish. Two of the districts were united with some of the adjoining districts, and unless there was a renumbering of districts, of which no information is available, these were Districts 12 and 13.

(63) Gazetteer of Conn. and R. I., page 300

(64) The number of districts is confirmed further by tables in the Report to the General Assembly by the Committee on Education 1845 and by the Reports of the Commissioners of Common Schools

DISTRICT NUMBER 12 FIRST SOCIETY

No records of what transpired in this district remain today. The oldest residents do not recall ever having heard of such a school; even its name is lost, and yet we know such a district did exist. "For \$20.00 received February 27, 1824 Elijah and Joseph Foskit deeded District Number 12, First Society a piece of land 'located as follows on the south side of the highway at the foot of ridge hill, so called, three and one half rods fronting on highway, thence three rods to a stake and stones, thence three and one half rods to a stake and stones, thence three rods to said highway.'" (65) In this case we have a clue as to where the highway was, albeit, not a very helpful one. By a special act of the General Assembly the Mineral Springs Turnpike Company was given permission in 1831 "to alter the road between the ---- Mineral Springs and the Forsket (Foskit?) school so called." (66) The only other reference found was the record of the sale of the property in 1848. It was purchased by Allurin H. Ferry, and is bounded as follows- "north on highway, southwest on land of Eber W. Smith, and east on land of Isaac B. Foskit. Reserving to said district the right to use said school house until the new one being built is complete." (67) In those days there were many Foskits in Stafford who dealt rather freely in real estate. This, coupled with the fact that early land

(65) L.R. Vol. 14 page 351

(66) Private Laws of Conn. May 1831 page 1441

(67) L.R. Vol. 20 page 537

records seldom indicate from whom the grantor secured his title, makes it practically impossible to say with certainty where the property was located.

Careful search has revealed the following factors which lead to the belief it was located in the vicinity (probably southeast) of the New City Mill above Staffordville. The Eber Smith home is located across the road from the mill, now owned by Mr. Frank Belcher. Maps of 1857 and 1869 show a sharp bend in the road so that it ran nearly east and west. The maps indicate a number of Foskits living in the vicinity.

In selling their School property in 1848 the district reserved the right to its use "until the new one being built is complete." It is not likely that the district built a new one, since various records show it was not in existence four years later. However, as Staffordville, only a short distance away, was building a new school in 1848, presumably this is the school house referred to in the deed of sale. A few years later a daughter of Eber Smith conducted a private school in her father's home. Possibly this was for the accommodation of small children for whom the walk to Staffordville was considered a hardship.

DISTRICT NUMBER 13 FIRST SOCIETY

This district has passed into oblivion in very much the same way as District 12. Three of the older residents (68) agree that it was located at the foot of Hedgehog Mountain near the home of Milo Bradway. (69) It may have been called the Hyde District or the Holmes District as there were many people of that name living in that vicinity.

(68) Mr. Milo Bradway states that he has heard his mother's half-sister say she attended this school. Mr. Arthur Smith tells me Milton Soule spoke of a school there called the Holmes District. Mrs. Arthur West believes that her mother and Julia (Pinney) Johnson attended the school.

(69) L.R. Vol. 64 page 155

HYDEVILL SCHOOL

This district, located between Staffordville and Furnace Hollow, probably derives its name from the Hyde family, some of whom operated blast furnaces there. The earliest school in this district of which we have been able to secure any information, was located on the road leading from Hydeville Mill northeasterly toward the head of the Staffordville pond. Mr. Maro Hatch tells me his mother attended this school.

This was a private burying ground (God's Acre) and can be easily found. The school built on this site was used until the consolidation of the Hydeville District with the Furnace Hollow District in 1895.

Mr. James Risley, acting school visitor, says in the 1891-92 report "This district has a very creditable school and if they would substitute modern desks and furniture for the present antiquated, inconvenient, and uncomfortable seats and desks and double the area of the blackboard it would be an improvement . . . and would be a credit to the district." (71) Mr. Hatch tells me that when he attended school in this building it had the double desks and seats. In the following year's report we find the school rather crowded, and the district in need of a graded school. The secretary's report for 1893-4 shows there were 45 children

(70) L.R. Vol 23 page 458

(71) Report of School Visitors 1892-3 page 21

in attendance in the fall term and seats for 60 children were provided.

When we consider that these children were all in one room and that their ages ranged from four years to sixteen years or older we too agree that Hydeville needed a new school! (72)

(72) The land and buildings of District #11 were sold for \$75 L.R. Vol 48 page 163

NEW FURNACE OR STAFFORDVILLE DISTRICT

Iron furnaces were first prominent in Stafford's history at Stafford Hollow which for many years was called Furnace Hollow. Later a furnace was constructed at Staffordville, and this was then called New Furnace.

The first mention of a school in this district is found in the land records of 1800. In that year Captain Solven Converse (73) deeded about one fourth of an acre of land to District #5, 1st Society for the sum of \$10.00. This is typical of the early records and illustrates the difficulty one encounters. "Beginning at a stake and stones in the west line of the highway, 6 feet north of the N.W. corner of the new school house frame in said district aforesaid, thence westerly about 2 rods to a stake and stones, 6 feet west of said frame, thence southerly about 3 rods, to a stake and stones 6 feet to the south of said frame, thence northerly by the highway to the first mentioned bound." (74) This was probably the first school building in the district. The deed refers to it as the new school house, but that does not necessarily mean it had a predecessor. "In 1830 the village consisted of six dwelling houses--an iron foundry--a small store--a carding mill, a blacksmith shop, a wooden structure about 18 x 20 feet which served

(73) Father of Parley and Solva Converse--Solven Converse buried on Stafford Street in the old cemetery.

(74) L. R. Vol. 8, Page 352-3

alternately for public schools, singing schools, religious meetings, debating clubs and village court room--". Possibly this 18 x 20 structure stood on the site sold district #5 in 1800 by Solven Converse. (75)

In the following years Staffordville grew rapidly. In 1848 the one room school was abandoned, and "a large two story building was erected in the central part of the village with the lower story fitted up as a school room. The upper story was a commodious hall which was used for religious meetings." (76)

As the community grew and its population increased, the school facilities had to be expanded, so we find the "commodious hall", being used for a school room. In 1881 we find "Staffordville, with its permanent and faithful teachers (Mr. and Mrs. John O. Booth) keeping the even and steady tenor of their way, making a great change in its school building. The building has been removed to another site and a third recitation room and a hall are to be added." (77) The building was moved from beside the road back toward the Staffordville Cemetery property, (78) and a basement built under the building. Two rooms were added making it a two story, four room building. It is still standing, and is, today, used as a dwelling. (79)

(75) Judge J. H. Booth--Cole page 504

(76) Cole Page 506--Congregational and Methodist Churches were built a few years later.

(77) Report of School Visitors 1881-2

(78) L. R. Vol. 31, page 296

(79) L. R. Vol. 67, page 35

HALL DISTRICT

The Hall District is located in the northeast corner of the town, bounded on the north by Wales (formerly South Brimfield, Mass.), on the east by Union, Connecticut.

Early stage routes passed through this district. John Adams in his reminiscences of Stafford speak of his visit here in 1771. He came from Worcester by way of Brimfield and spent the night at Colburn's Tavern (81). The Stafford Pool or Mineral Springs Turnpike passes through this district. There were several taverns where travellers lodged, and where the horses were changed.

There were early settlers in this part of the town among them Ephriam and Hannah Hall (82) from whom the district name is derived. Another early family is the Agard family, a Benjamin Agard settling in Stafford before 1778. (83)

"A log school house having the furniture, fireplace and other marks of those early times was moved away about 1820." (84)

(81) Cole page 491

(82) Hannah Hall, daughter of Ephraim and Hannah Hall, born in Stafford January 21, 1782. Stafford Vital Records, Barbour Collection An Ephraim and Hannah Hall are buried in the old Hall District Cemetery. Ephraim died 1813, aged 80. A Charity Hall the daughter of Samuel and Sarah Hall was born in Stafford 1723. Stafford Vital Records, Barbour Collection

(83) A Benjamin Agard married Sarah Hiscox at Stafford, January 23, 1777. A Benjamin Agard was born in Stafford March 5, 1787. Stafford Vital Records, Barbour Collection

(84) The portion of Cole's reference relating to a log building is not too credible. I have found no references to log buildings in any other community. Cole page 486

There are oral traditions in the Smith and Bradway families concerning the fireplace. Mrs. Arthur Smith states her grandfather (born 1813) attended the school when it was heated by a fireplace. His father also attended the Hall school.

Mr. Milo Bradway tells the following story. One of the early teachers wore cowhide boots which he replaced when in the schoolroom with slippers, and the boots were then placed near the fireplace. One of the more obstreerous boys in the school kicked the boots into the fire, then dashed out of the building, pursued by the teacher in his slippers. It appears very likely that this school was heated by a fireplace as there were no stoves in general use as early as the first school was built. (85) When Mrs. Smith's mother attended the school it was heated by a box stove made at the Stafford Furnace. The desks were so called writing benches, i.e., they were placed around the walls of the room. (86)

(85) Report of the Commissioner of Common Schools 1839, page 64 "In 104 districts in New London County 75 use stoves and in 23, stoves and fireplaces"
 (86) "Of 62 schools visited, 48 had desks attached to the wall." Schools in Union, Conn. , had similar desks about 1790 according to Hammond in his, History of Union.

When the last building, which is still standing across the road from Mr. William Riegger's home was built is not known(87). Either this or another building in the immediate vicinity was there in 1853. In that year part of the turnpike "between a new highway and number 9 school house(Hall) was discontinued" (88). This is the portion of the turnpike leading over Birch Hill to the home of Fred Bowden.

Stafford's oldest residents have no recollection of any other building and there is none referred to in any available Report of School Visitors (89)

The district was thickly populated during the early period, when agriculture was the principal means of livelihood in the community. Early maps show a great many homes in the vicinity of the school, and one of the older residents tells me there 35-40 children who attended the school in the winter term. Some of these were, "man grown boys, who chewed tobacco." (90)

(87) L.R. Vol 52 page 242

(88) Wood Turnpikes of New England page 372. He says the turnpike was not very successful and was abandoned in 1835

(89) Available from 1867

(90) Mr. Myron Heck, born 3/4/1855

FURNACE HOLLOW

The name of this district is derived from the iron furnaces which made it famous for many years.

The first school of which we have been able to secure any information(91) is said to have been a one room building located where the parsonage of the Universalist Church now stands. Careful search of the land records fails to reveal any information regarding the matter. Without doubt there was a one room school somewhere in that vicinity, but our first piece of documentary evidence is a lease from Ephraim Hyde (92) and Billings Grant (92) dated 1838. A two room structure stood on this site which is at the fork of the roads below the spot where the first school is presumed to have been located. When this two room structure was discontinued as a school it was purchased by Ella F. Warren. The Warrens rebuilt the structure into a dwelling house. The writer visiting Mr. Warren some years ago was shown some of the school furniture which had been in the building. The seats from the primary room were of the pedestal type with arms on each side and a small box like arrangement attached to the seat on one side for holding the child's book. There were no desks with these seats. The desks from the room for the older students were of the 2 student type with an inkwell in the center of the desk. The amazing thing about them being that the tops were of cherry !

(91) An oral tradition. Mr. Willie Abbott states his mother mentioned it

(92) L.R. Vol 18 page 429-30

The knives that the boys carried in those days must have been strong and sharp if one is to judge by the amount and depth of the carving in these desks!

In the Report of the Board of School Visitors for the year 1892-93, Mr. W.B. Batchelder suggested that District No. 1, Furnace Hollow and District No. 11, Hydeville could be combined with advantage to both districts. "The Hollow School house is beyond repair and without a suitable playground" (93) Apparently the people in these districts agreed, and at a town meeting held March 25, 1895 (94) it was voted that they be consolidated and the combined district should be known as District No. 1.

A new site was chosen for the building, and a four room structure known as Pinney School was erected in 1895 (95). The bell in the building was donated by Mrs. Julia Pinney Johnson.

(93) Vol. B Town Meeting Records page 238

(94) Report of the Board of School Visitors 1892-93 page 21

(95) Land for Pinney School was given by Mrs Esther S. Pinney
10/21/95

WEST STAFFORD CENTER

This school is located near the highway leading from Stafford Springs to Somers near the present village of West Stafford. The original center of the West Parish was on the hill near the old cemeteries. There were two churches built there prior to 1800, and this section bore the same relation to the West Parish as Stafford Street did to the East Parish. Like the East Parish, it was built on a hill, and the water power which was to bring about a withdrawal of population was located in the valley.

Several flourishing industrial establishments grew up in West Stafford Center, and people moved there from their homes on the surrounding hills. The church was moved to the Center about 1864 (96).

The first West Stafford Center School was located east of the present school property and adjacent to it. It was a small one room structure built near the highway.

In 1866 it was decided that a new school was needed. Apparently there was some difficulty over its location since the matter was finally taken to Superior Court. The Court

(96) Knit goods, linen thread, and later machinery
Cole page 517

(97) "Commencing at the bank on the north side of the highway and on a line south of the southwest corner of the school house in said district. Thence northerly on a line with the west side of said school house ..."

L.R. Vol. 26 page 522



WEST STAFFORD SCHOOL

1945

appointed a committee consisting of John Y. Adams, Hannibal Alden, and Zenas D. Washburn. They met on June 22, 1866 and fixed the site of the new building. This site was on land of Dr. Joshua Blodgett who was awarded the sum of \$190 for the property taken for school purposes. (97)

The new building, although larger than the previous one was still a one room school. Its growth in numbers of students continued until it became necessary to employ an assistant to aid the teacher. The report of 1893-4 indicates there were 60 seats with 58 children registered. The following year the building was enlarged and the building divided into two class rooms. It is still standing today having been in continuous use since it was built.

STAFFORD VILLAGE OR LEONARD DISTRICT

The Stafford Village District was among the first parts of the town to be settled, and the road leading from Furnace Hollow to the Monson line was laid out very early. The land along this road is quite level, therefore desirable for agricultural purposes.

No documentary evidence is available today as to the early school in this area. However, the traditions all agree that the earliest known school was constructed of brick and was located at the north end of the cemetery on what is now Galicia property. A few of the bricks still remaining on the spot plainly indicate that they are of the old hand made type, being somewhat smaller than the bricks used today. It would be interesting to know where the bricks came from, and why the school was built of brick. Stafford has few early buildings of brick. There do not seem to be any clay deposits in the town so the clay for these bricks must have been brought by ox carts from a neighboring town and a kiln fired near the spot where the bricks were to be used.

The small white structure at the fork of the roads at the south end of the cemetery was erected about 1884 (98). It has now been removed and is used as a dwelling (99)

- (98) Report of the Board of School Visitors 1885-6 page 12
 (99) L. R. Vol. 81 page 135-6



Stafford Village School — 1906

STAFFORD VILLAGE OR LEONARD SCHOOL

ROCKWELL HILL

This school located on the west side of the highway was named, as is the surrounding territory, from the Rockwell family, a number of whom lived in the vicinity and who were large land owners.

A school building stood on the site as early as 1859 and according to the memory of the oldest residents (100) this is the only building since that date. However, several of these people are agreed that there was another structure that preceded this one, built on or near the same site.

One rather interesting tradition (101) indicating the difficulties of the early school teachers relates to a young woman who depended on a near neighbor to keep her informed of the time of day. It appears the school did not have a clock, so the neighbor very accommodatingly hung a tablecloth from her window when it was time for recess or dismissal.

(100) Wallace Jones - born 1860

(101) Mr. B. R. Arnold

LULL OR ZICLAG DISTRICT

This district located above the early center of the West Parish is named for the Lull family, a number of whom lived in this vicinity.

It is sometimes referred to as the Ziclag or Ziklag district. By whom and for what reason it was given this name cannot be determined today. The word Ziklag (102) is of Biblical origin and refers to a city.

A record of only one building in the district has been found, but this, like other districts, may have had a predecessor.

There is an oral tradition that Cyril Johnson, Sr. (born about 1790) was a teacher in the school. (103)

SQUARE POND DISTRICT

This district known today as Birch or Crystal Lake derives its name from the nearby lake.

As there was a Baptist Society meeting in this area about 1760 large enough to petition the town for relief from Church taxes, (104) presumably this would indicate sufficient inhabitants to support a school.

The only building of which we can secure any information (built before consolidation) was vacated about 1900.

(102) Rev. Dr. Kendrick Grobel and Rev. Dr. James Bartholomew agree that the derivation of the word is unknown, it being a place name probably borrowed by the Hebrews from an earlier race.

(103) Miss Mary Smith

(104) Grobel (page 33)

PATTEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

This district located in the Northeast corner of the town is sometimes called the Davis district. Which title was first used is not known, but the printed Reports of School Visitors give Patten as its official name.

The Patten and Davis families were among the early settlers and were quite numerous in this vicinity. There is a tradition that Cornelius Davis, one of Stafford's first settlers, was granted a piece of land ten miles square for services in the Indian Wars.

The only known building is still standing at the corner of two roads. The stone wall in back of it indicates it was built in part at least, on highway land, and this perhaps, accounts for the fact that no land record of the property can be found. The present building is in an excellent state of preservation and may very likely have been preceded by another structure.

THE WORKS DISTRICT

This school district located in the southeast corner of the town was at one time one of the thriving districts with a large enrollment.

There are no available records relating to the district's early history. The only known building stands beside the road, almost on the town line between Stafford and Willington. (105) There is no mention of when it was built in any available School Visitors' report so it was probably built before 1867. Still standing, it is now used as a garage for housing a school bus! Its location causes speculation as to whether it might have been a "joint district," i. e. a district in two adjoining towns. These were fairly common in early times with the statutes making provisions for their government.

THE WASHBURN OR ORCUTTVILLE DISTRICT

This district was officially known as the Washburn School, deriving its title from families of that name who lived near there.

The building is located on the Monson Road and the History of Stafford says, the building was constructed in 1845 following the destruction, by fire, of the previous building. (106)

(105) L. R. Vol. 47 page 242

(106) History of Stafford page 22.



THE WASHBURN SCHOOL

The building is at present used as a dwelling house, (107) having been vacated as a school building in 1917 following the construction of the building in the village of Orcuttville.

CROW HILL DISTRICT

In the early part of Stafford's history this area was interlaced with highways and dotted with farm houses and its school was a thriving one. The western half of the district is a fairly level plateau sloping sharply to the north toward the Massachusetts line and to the east toward Middle River. Early maps sometimes refer to the hill as Crown Hill. (108) Possibly this was its name at that time, but more likely it was a cartographer's error.

The school was located on the side of the hill beside the road leading from State Line Pond to the summit. Tradition has it that the first school was located near the top of the hill. This is borne out by a letter from Luzerne (109) Washburne, to Georgianna Washburn in 1904. This letter refers to recollections of 60 years ago which would indicate the time referred to as being about 1845. The exact location of this earlier school, cannot be determined today. There are a number of abandoned roads,

(107) L. R. Vol. 66 page 268 and Vol. 44 page 138

(108) Eaton and Osgood, Map of Tolland County, 1857

(109) Spelled "Euzenne" in the Press article April 20, 1904.

however, which branch off at the summit and would lead one to the belief that this was a more central location in early times. "There was a time...when Crow Hill could run a red hot district war over the location of the school, or the question of whether to move and repair the old wreck, which stood higher geographically, than its present location; and if tradition is truthful they had a continuous performance of 'a hot time in the old town tonight,' which lasted many months and it seems the west end of the district finally won out and avoided the necessity of going down hill for education." (109a) "There was probably no blood shed in that scrimmage but they were willing to fight for a cause or personal interest... Today desolation and birches appear to remain supreme over the greater part of the hill." (110)

No land record can be found concerning either location of the school. Tradition says the land for the building located on the side of the hill (after the building was moved from the summit) was given the district to be used for school purposes. Either this was an oral agreement or the district failed to record its deed. The foundation stones still remain, and the site can be located. The building was destroyed by fire in 1905 and a new building was erected at the foot of the hill. The children from the west side were transported to the school.

(109a) Traditions has it that the district voted to move the school building part way down the hill. If it fell apart in the moving a new building was to be erected at the foot of the hill. It held together!

(110) Luzerne E. Washburn... A communication to Georgianna Washburn published in the Press April 20, 1904

FOXVILLE DISTRICT

The Foxville District was located in the western part of of the Borough of Stafford Springs (111) and probably derives its name from the Fox family. Old maps and documents refer to it as a suburb of Stafford Springs.

"The oldest school building was located ... at the corner of West Main and Green Streets"(112). This was used sometime before 1800 as "the next building was located this side of the former land mark and of the German Clubhouse," now the Slavish Church and "was built before 1815" This is sometimes referred to as "the little red schoolhouse" (112)

This section of the town thickly populated today was in those times sparsely settled and these school buildings were located for the convenience of chuldren who walked from their homes to the school.

The people of the Methodist Church held services in the little red schoolhouse and at a meeting held there in 1832 voted to build an edefice of their own. This building was erected west of the school since most of the members lived northand west of the area. (113)

As industry developed in the Springs Village the center of population moved eastward. The number of children attending the school outgrew the one room structure and a larger building was needed.

- (111) Report of the Board of School Visitors 1867, refers to it
as the Converse District
- (112) Press April 20, 1904
- (113) Cole page 558

In 1854 the two room brick building on West Main Street was erected. This is now standing in the rear of the Central Garage (Benjamin Campo owner).

This was a fine building, and one which the district could not have afforded had it not been for the fact that the mill brought taxable wealth to the district, which many of the other districts did not have.

Considerable interest was evinced in the new building. At a meeting held December 19, 1854 a set of Regulations was adopted and orderd printed (114). That, the people were justly proud of their new school and were interested in promoting the welfare of their children is clearly shown by this document. A portion of the preamble follows- "In order to secure to ourselves and our posterity and the blessings and benefits of the system of School Education in this state it becomes necessary that Parents, Guardians, Teachers and Pupils should cooperate with becoming energy, perseverance, and harmonious efforts, in the use of all suitable measures, to promote so desireable an object" This is followed by the duties to be performed by the district committee, instructors and pupils. The pupils were charged with a rather lengthy list of "shall nots" which is interesting in the light of pupils behavior today. One wonders if parents and grandparents were as well behaved, as they now think that they were, or does one forget, when the weight of parental duties brings a realization of life's more serious aspect. Under the heading of "General Duties" we find "that each parent and guardian, of the pupils, ought to cultivate and cherish a suitable interest in the Schools; they ought to visit them as often as may be consistent with other duties,

and ought not to shrink from the performance of any duty the object of which shall be the promotion of the intelligence and welfare of the Rising Generation in our midst."

We have no way of knowing today whether these jewels were the work of a few people and that the residents of the district merely voted "yes", at their meeting in December or whether they were debated and adopted in a more democratic manner. The very fact that the district had constructed such a fine building and had adopted these regulations indicates a revival of interest in the educational welfare of the community which had been sorely lacking throughout the state for some time.

It would be interesting to know if the high ideals the writers of this document had in mind were achieved. Our only records of what transpired in the district relate to a period of twenty years later. These are miscellaneous papers in the possession of Mr. Enos Penny relating to the years 1873-4-5-6. In the main they are receipted bills, cancelled notes, and the records of a few meetings.

Expenditures for supplies were not a large item in the budget, salaries and fuel accounting for the major part of the funds. Following is a list of expenditures for the year 1873-4. It is perhaps not complete since the teachers salaries are all for the term ending November 25, 1873.

1 bottle ink	.40
2 brooms	.70
Rope, lock and bolt	1.40
Setting 11 lights of glass	2.75
Adv. of annual meeting in local	
Paper	1.50

Repairs and building fence	59.95	(116)
7 $\frac{1}{2}$ Cords of wood	39.06	
Jennie A. Watson (teacher)	72.00	
May L. Beckwith "	108.00	
Mattie Beckwith	108.00	
Enumerating children and making returns	5.00	

It would appear from the fact that three teachers were paid a salary for the same term that there must have been three rooms or schools as it was expressed in those days. This belief is strengthened by the fact that the minutes of the meeting of September 25, 1873 record the following vote. "Voted that all necessities for the school such as procuring a room (for a third school (117) or making alterations in the entry be left discretionary with the community" Att. G.C. Parkess, Clerk."

These minutes are in pencil and recorded on the back of the warning for the meeting. The warning had apparently been tacked up on a bulletin board since the corners are torn where it had been fastened.

(116) Bill for repairs and building the fence (from Elum Ellithorpe) was paid by giving the district's note.

(117) The words, (for a third school) are crossed out in the minutes of the meeting.

SPRINGS DISTRICT

This, the largest of Stafford's several villages, is located at the junction of two valleys, "where the branches of the Willimantic meet"

It achieved its first prominence through the fame of its mineral springs. At the time of John Adams's visit in 1771 the Child's house was about the only building in the village. The Springs House erected in the early 1800's " stood alone in its dignity for many years"(118). It was a famous resort operated for some time by Dr. Willard, a son of Stafford's most noted minister.

"The business history of the village had its origin in the building of the grist mill, the saw mill, and the trip hammer and forge owned by the Parkess Brothers"(118)

Its early school history is lost, today. In 1904 the Press published an article written by Miss Georgianna Washburn, which was one of a series the members of the Current Events Club had written the previous winter. Her information was gathered from older residents living at that time. The first school in the Springs District mentioned in her paper is one on Willington Avenue built in 1842. "It has been enlarged and is now the first tenement house on the right from East Main Street"(118a)

(118) Cole:

(118a) Stafford Press April 20, 1904

Careful search fails to reveal any information as to when the property was acquired by the district. When it was abandoned as a school in 1854 or 1855, the property was sold. The records have been traced to the present date so that we know it was used as a school. " Overflow schools were held at various times and places; in the building known as the shoe shop ... back of Christopher Allen's home ... East Main Street. At one time the primary schools met in the basement of the Springs House; in Fred Chandlers' Store; and in the old Baker Building." Some of these may have been select schools, not public schools. Miss Washburn speaks of them as "overflow schools", but I have been unable to find any record of more than two elementary teachers being employed at any one time in the Springs District until after 1881.

On October 10, 1854, (119) the district purchased land on what is now called School Street, and erected a two room brick building, which was used until 1884, when the district, having consolidated with Foxville transferred its children to the new school on High Street-- the High School. The School Street building was then sold and used as a factory for making card clothing(120). The bell which had hung in the School Street structure was taken to the new school and at the present time this bell cast in 1853 stands in the lobby of the present Stafford High School

(119) L.R. Vol. 22 page 621-2

(120) L.R. Vol. 34 page 636

SECONDARY EDUCATION

As there were many among the early colonists who had enjoyed the benefits of higher education in England, they were determined that their children should enjoy similar benefits in the new land.

The Common School did not prepare for college so county towns had been required to maintain grammar schools. These, however, reached only a few, and a tutorial system grew up in the smaller communities. The tutor, usually the minister, took the boys into his home for lessons in Latin and Greek to prepare them for admission to Harvard and Yale.

WILLARD'S SCHOOL

"Dr. John Willard conducted one of these one-man preparatory schools throughout most of his fifty years of ministry in Stafford (1756-1807)

Several distinguished men received their preparatory training under his guidance. Among these students were three nephews, sons of Joseph Willard, President of Harvard, 1781-1804. President Willard saw fit to have all three of his sons, Augustus, Sidney, and Samuel, prepared for Harvard by his younger brother in the Connecticut wilderness in spite of the excellent masters they could have had at Cambridge. His judgment was vindicated by the brilliant career of Sidney who after three years with his Uncle John on Stafford Street graduated from Harvard at eighteen, was librarian of Harvard at twenty, and at twenty seven and for twenty five yearsthereafter, professor of Hebrew and Oriental languages in Harvard, also for a time professor of English Literature and Latin, often a member of the Massachusetts legislature, and once mayor of Cambridge.

He says his uncle rarely had more than three pupils, and on an average not as many as that. There were only four others besides the Willard nephews in the three years Sidney was there.

The worldly gain to Dr. Willard must have been very slight. In writing to the father of a prospective pupil in 1791 he says: 'my usual terms have been 6 s/ pr Week for Board and Instruction; under Board we include Washing but not Wood and Candles: I have with me two nephews from Cambridge, who will find their Proportion of these last Articles'

A former pupil writing from Dartmouth encloses greetings to 'your lattan scholars' Willard often speaks of his pupils as having studied the languages with him. We therefore infer that the curriculum was mainly linguistic" (121) There were, however, many other textbooks (122)

(121) Grobel, First Church of Stafford page 43 ff

(122) The inventory of Dr. Willard's library contains a list of about 300 volumes. Some of his books had probably been given to his sons. The list includes a Greek and a Latin Composition, the Works of Samuel Johnson, Gesselius History, 2 vol., Lenfants History, 2 vol., Johnson's Dictionary, Virgil, Horace, Webster's Institute, Hebrew Lexicon, Surveying, Wingate's Arithmetic, Watt's Principles of Geography, Woodward's Natural History, Aesop's Fables, Clark's Essay on Education. Stafford Probate Records, Vol.6, page 323

Note- Dr. Grobel's book has a partial list of students who studied under Willard. There are about 20 names of which 11 are from Stafford. This list was gathered from Willard's correspondence in the hands of his great-granddaughter, etc.

A SCHOOL OF
HIGHER GRADE

The first attempt at founding a high school of which we have any record is a brief announcement in the Stafford NewsLetter of September 1st, 1866, to the effect that the term of the High School will open at the Town House on September 4th. "Parents are reminded that the people from the northern part of the town have supported the school very well in the past". (123) The announcement continues with the statement that a stage was to run daily from the Springs to the school at the Town Hall in the Hollow. The fare for students was to be \$1.00 per week. This notice would lead one to believe that a school had been held at the Springs at some previous time. I believe that the school at the Springs had been in the nature of a private venture, a so-called "select school".

At first the venture appeared to be a success. The following week we find that a Mr. Briggs had commenced the school at the Hollow on September 4 (124). In late September, Mr. Briggs resigned because of ill health, but a successor, a Mr. Boston of Harvard, was found to finish the term. He was assisted by Miss E.C. Halliday. There were fifty seven students the first term consisting of 37 boys and 20 girls. Although this school was referred to as a High school and was attended by students from several parts of the town, it was not, at first at least supported in any way by the Town. It appears to have been a sort of joint venture of District Number 1, Furnace Hollow and District Number 2, Springs and was supported by tuition fees.

(123) Stafford News Letter, September 1, 1866

(124) Mr. I.E. Briggs, Stafford News Letter, December 1, 1866

An advertisement in the Stafford News Letter of December 1, 1866 states, "The winter term will commence December 26, and continue fourteen weeks. Rates of tuition will be as follows- Common English Branches 50 cents per week, Bookkeeping \$1.00 additional for the term, Greek, Latin and French all or either \$1.50 for the term.

This winter term was held at the Springs and the Committee was evidently at a loss as to where to hold the school. "The Congregational Vestry, has been used for this purpose heretofore but the ladies are just about repairing and refitting.... besides the vestry is not a suitable place for a school room and as we have got to look the fact square in the face that a new school house is needed and must eventually be built, why not go about it ..." (125)

Mr. Alfred Hall of Harvard was the principal during the winter term. Evidently the school was successful the first two terms and the interested parties succeeded in getting the town to give financial assistance since the town meeting records show (126) that on April 3, 1867 the town voted \$ 500.00 toward the support of a High School to be held i term at the Hollow and 2 terms at the Springs.

There is no mention of a summer session in the paper. The older students were apparently needed on the farms. In August the News Letter (127) announced that the fall term would open in Oronoco Hall with Mr. Hall, who since his last term had graduated from Harvard, as the Principal assisted by Miss Halliday

- (125) Stafford News Letter, December 1, 1866
- (126) Town Meeting Records, Vol. B, page 43
- (127) Stafford News Letter, August 2, 1867

Tuition was to be \$6.50 and \$8.50 per term.

Just what happened this term is not clear from the records I have. However, the term closed in November and the Committee felt there was not sufficient encouragement being given to warrant the employing of teachers for another term. Apparently the number of pupils fell off sharply the last term since in his report to the State Board of Education (128) Mr. F.L. Batchelder says "its success as to numbers was all that could be desired the first two terms ... it is not large at present and more pupils is indeed, its great want."

Three years later the need for providing school accommodations for the growing number of children in the Springs District forced consideration of a high school again. At the annual meeting of the district held in September 1870, a committee was appointed to confer with a like committee from District Number 3, Foxville, to see whether the districts should be consolidated or whether they should combine their efforts in some other way and build a school of higher grade. (129)

In December a meeting was held in the Springs and the following resolution adopted; "Resolved- that it is the sense of this meeting that the time has now fully come when a high school is indispensable to the welfare of Stafford Springs and that we will use our influence to the advantages of such a school in our midst. Resolved - that committees be now appointed to consider the wants of this village as to a high school, present a plan for such a school and for the securing of funds for the erection of suitable buildings." (130)

(128) Report of the State Board of Education 1868

(129) Stafford News Letter September 27, 1870

(130) Stafford News Letter December 22, 1870

The following February District Number 2 voted unanimously to consolidate with the West District (Foxville). Alas! The West District was not of the same mind. No action was taken at their meeting held on the same night, but at at adjourned meeting "it was voted not to consolidate with the East District (Springs) and the district will patch up its school house and jog along in the same old style" (131) Possibly all was not as serene in the Springs District as their unanimous vote would indicate as we find a town meeting called for April 3, 1871 to see if the town will set off Converseville and Glynville as a separate district. (The Warren Woolen Company was the Converseville Mill) Fortunately the town voted not to set it off.

For the next decade children who were to enjoy the benefits of more than common school education, received it at one of the neighboring academies, located at Monson, Brimfield, Norwich, and Wilbraham. Some no doubt attended private schools for Stafford, like many other vtowns enjoyed its share of "select schools"; some of which were of higher grade.

Existing records do not mention any agitation during this period for the establishment of a high school. Probably all was not so quiet as the records indicate. The people interested in higher education were undoubtedly making converts here and there while patiently awaiting the decease of some of their opponents.

By 1881 the conditions of the two schools in the Springs village demanded attention, and the Tolland County Press of March 24, 1881 commented on a sermon preached by an "able divine" (132)

(131) Stafford News Letter March 30, 1871

(132) Probably Rev. Mr. Maxham

In the same issue of the paper is an article by Mr. B.F. Elliot, a teacher in the grammar department of the Springs School in which he bewails the unfortunate state of affairs. He mentions teachers having 30 to 50 students in a room and that some of the students only attend two of the three terms of each year. Mr. Isaac M. Agard, (133) writing from Northampton, urges his birthplace to consider the needs of its young people with regards to a High School. Three long articles in one issue of a paper in which we have heretofore found but little could not have been a coincidence. Events were afoot and moved rapidly after this date. In May, Mr. Elliot circulated a paper calling for a mass meeting in Borough Hall. There was little opposition among those present at the meeting, to a plan for uniting the Springs and Foxville Districts. As the law required that the matter be voted by the town at a town meeting some were fearful that the rural districts would oppose it. Two plans for solving the districts' problems were discussed. One was to build a new school for the higher grades, using the existing buildings for the elementary grades; the other was to dispense with the existing buildings and build one large school to house all of the students. A committee was appointed and directed to proceed as rapidly as possible (134)

(133) . . Agard, born in the Hall District, graduated from Amherst College - Later Principal of Rockville, Conn., High School

(134) Tolland County Press April 7 and 14 1881

THE SPRINGS AND Districts 2 and 3 holding meetings in their
FOXVILLE UNITE

respective buildings voted to consolidate (135)

The selectmen were then petitioned to call a town meeting to consider the question. This they did and on May 18, 1881 (136) voted 105 to 98 to consolidate the two districts, the new district to be known as District Number 2, Springs. The close vote is commented on by the editor of the paper, who explains that there were those it on the ground that no provision was made for a Town High School, while others felt it might be harmful to town consolidation. The real opposition had held its peace until after the vote had been taken, and had then claimed it illegal, since it had not been taken at an annual town meeting! (137)

When school opened the following September the Committee decided to have a primary department in each of the two buildings, using the other room in Foxville for an intermediate department, and the other room in the Springs for a grammar department (138) This was a progressive step since it allowed for better grading and grouping of the children. There were objections, however, from some who felt the distance too great for their offspring to walk.

THE HIGH SCHOOL In November (139) the Committee proposed that a room be fitted up in Borough Hall for the higher grades. This the district authorized, and it opened on November 28, 1881 with Mr. Creamer in charge.

- (135) Tolland County Press May 3, 1881
- (136) Town Meeting Records Vol. B page 141
- (137) Tolland County Press May 19, 1881
- (138) Tolland County Press Sept. 8, 1881
- (139) Tolland County Press Dec. 1, 1881

Eighteen pupils were in attendance at the new school in Borough Hall. "Thus a new and higher grade was created and attended in part by advanced scholars residing in other districts. This is considered the germ of what will ultimately become in itself a school that will afford advantages equal to those afforded at Monson, Brimfield, or Wilbraham." (140) As time passed the new school grew in numbers and another room was added permitting a broadening of the curriculum.

THE FIRST HIGH
SCHOOL BUILDING

In March 1882, the Borough of Stafford Springs purchased the Gay lot on High Street, (141) and the following September the District voted to build a High School on this site, purchasing the land from the Borough for \$1700, (142). A building committee consisting of Chester J. Holmes, W.D.Heald, and C.G.Ellis was elected and Warren R. Briggs, a well known school architect was employed. The original plans called for a three story structure with a basement. Provision was made in these plans for two additions to the building to be made when the needs of the school made expansion necessary.

Work was started in July 1883 and by mid-September the frame work had been erected. The foundation was laid by Levi R. Lull and John Nichols. The carpentry work was done by employees of T.D.Johnson. By spring the building was completed.

On Monday April 14, 1884, school opened in the new building.

- (140) Report of the Board of School Visitors 1881-2
- (141) L.R. Vol. 32 page 5-6
- (142) Tolland County Press September 29, 1882
- (143) L.R. Vol. 32 page 313



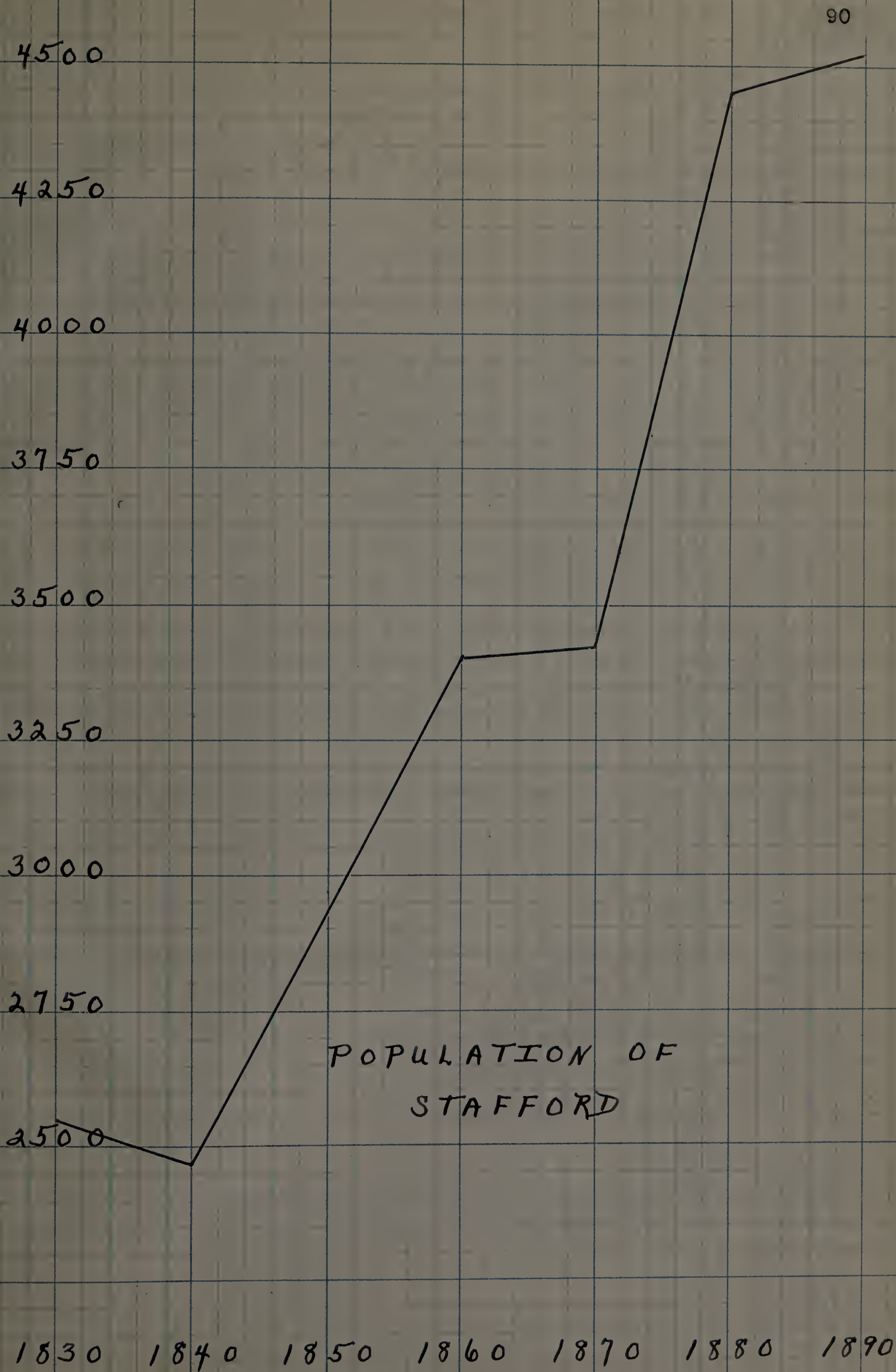
1930

The report of that year indicates there were 238 children registered that term, so even though the rooms were spacious there must have been some large classes. (144)

The School Visitors Report for 1886-7 gives the course of study. The program was much broader in scope than one might expect and indicates that many of the children were not planning to enter college. The mathematics started with arithmetic and proceeded through to trigonometry. Under Languages we find English offered the first year followed by three years of French with an elective of Latin or German the Senior year. The History program included United States, Ancient, Medieval, Modern and Civics. Penmanship and Bookkeeping were offered the first two years followed by Composition and Rhetoric. Drawing was offered for four years. Literature was taken up by the school as a whole, as was Music, Declamations, Debates etc.

The first class to graduate consisted of three girls and two boys who received their diplomas in June 1886.

(144) The 238 children included all grades. We do not know how many were in the High School proper.



1100

1050

1000

950

900

850

800

1831

750

1882

1889

1883

1887

1885

1891

1895

1893

1897

1880

1876

1878

1859

1866

1870

1852

1834

ENUMERATION OF STAFFORD CHILDREN

From Reports of The State Board of Education

THE BATTLE FOR CONSOLIDATION

Nature endowed Stafford with a number of streams which furnished abundant water power for early industries. Along these streams grist mills grew into machine shops, cotton manufactories and later woolen mills.

As the years passed and the productivity of the stony hill farms decreased, the population gradually withdrew from the rural areas of the town to settle in the valley villages near the mills.

"The pioneer settlers . . . made their clearings on the loftiest practicable land . . . Churches and school houses sprang up nearby, and Stafford . . . stood builded as a city on the hills. But when the railroad come (1850) and mills began to multiply along the streams it was evident that the old order must give way and the old centers of population be shorn of their influence and glory." (144)

The decreasing number of children in many of the districts made the maintenance of a satisfactory school situation a difficult one. There were murmurings that since the town supported the schools, why should it not also have their entire management.

When a law passed in 1865 made it possible for a town to consolidate all of its districts, the matter was duly considered in town meeting. (145) The opposition was too strong, however,

(144) Report of School Visitors 1888 page 5

(145) Town Meeting Records Vol. B page 180

and the town voted "no." Stafford was not ready for such a radical change.

Nevertheless, the old order was changing. "The ancient places of worship and the famous school districts, like the Works, and the Rockwell Hill, and the Street, and Crow Hill and the Webber . . . began to weaken. The fathers and mothers clung tenaciously to the old and dear spots where they were born... . But as the graves in the old burial places thickened, the bonds that held the younger generation . . . were no longer of avail." (146)

The ecclesiastical and school societies, having served their time and purpose, passed into history. The once powerful and defiant districts were, in some cases, merely debilitated vestiges of their former selves. Ten of the 17 districts existing in 1871 had from 8 to 24 children in attendance during that year. "Taking the West Parish . . . Crow Hill, Kent Hollow and Webber embracing about one half the territory of the parish . . . now . . . together, show an enumeration of less than 20 children . . . In the East Parish is the Works District enumerating 8 children." (147) (It had formerly enumerated 35-40) In 1866 an attempt was made to secure a favorable vote on consolidation, but the proponents of the plan were defeated. Consolidation, however, was continually urged by one School Visitor after another. The Rev. G.V. Maxham worked unceasingly

(146) Report of School Visitors 1888 page 6
 (147) Report of School Visitors 1889 page 1

for it, believing that if this goal could be reached many of the hindrances to the progress of the schools would be removed. In his report written in 1889 Mr. Maxham says, "How changed is the old road leading over the hill above (Stafford Street) once the great stage route. The Street District in the time of Charles Hammond* numbered in its school from eighty to a hundred scholars. On the valley road between Staffordville and the Springs, and including these places, live eight hundred and twenty six of the one thousand and sixty two children between the ages of 4 and 16 enumerated as belonging to the town." (148) The larger more densely populated districts improved their schools and erected new buildings, Staffordville adding two rooms in 1882, the High School at the Springs was built in 1883 and the Pinney at Stafford Hollow in 1895. The smaller districts did not have the taxable wealth necessary to make needed improvements and build new.

Bringing the schools together under town management would seem today to have been the sensible thing to do, yet one cannot help admiring the rugged stubbornness of the decadent districts.

As the population in the small districts continued to decrease, interest in school affairs waned. The management gradually passed from the all powerful district committee to the Board of School Visitors, elected at large by the town. This is exemplified in a letter from Mr. Batchelder, Chairman of the School Visitors to Zina W. Ellis, District Committee

*Chas. Hammond Born Union 1813, Grad. Yale 1839 Prin. of Monson Academy 25 yrs.

(148) Report of School Visitors 1889 page 1

dated November 25, 1880 in which he says; "We are still occasionally visited by anxious ones from District No. 12 (Square Pond). Their Complaints and fears are about as follows: They get no information as to when the winter school will commence--wish to have it commence not later than a week from next Monday. They are anxious to have the vote of the District carried out--that a male teacher be employed not known by any of them; and that the Winter term be the usual length--say 12 weeks. They fear also that Miss . . . may be engaged for the Summer term. I have said to them that we expect the vote of the District to be honestly carried out. Do not fail to have it so carried out . . . A petition has been presented to me asking that a meeting of the Board be called "to look into their affairs." I replied that I thought there was no need of such a meeting but if there should be we would have it called. I have talked with Mr. Maxham and he is of the same mind with myself and thinks if an effort is made to put her into the school next Summer that the matter be referred to the Board. Better, however, that you just say NO!

. . . As soon as you are certain who is to teach and when the school will commence. Please send word at once to George Nowell who will inform the rest. The stage driver goes past his house." (149)

In spite of the decrease in population and lack of interest in keeping the schools in repair Stafford was not without its

(149) Letter in possession of Mrs. Burt Chaffee

prophets and voices "crying in the wilderness." "Is it denied that the schools have lost their value?" says Mr. Maxham in the 1885-6 report. "The average age of scholars in small districts is one third less than twenty years ago." The schools no longer have the old robust vim that in an earlier age won the older boys and girls, when mature and experienced teachers taught and ruled with equal skill and vigor. They answered well for their time when . . . studies were few though severe." He might have added, and so was the discipline!

"Those who have clung tenaciously and triumphantly thus far to the old ways have unconsciously given impetus to the causes that have undermined those ways." (150) Perhaps it was not stubbornness . . . Secretary Hine of the State Department of Education recommended transporting scholars to consolidated schools. "While the town at large probably favors the plan, the inhabitants of the sparse sections object as a general thing. They fear it would result in an extinction of their districts. Another objection is found in the map of the town . . . its large territory, its hilly and roundabout roads . . . It may be narrow and wrong headed but one cannot but help admire . . . the . . . spirit with which . . . each district is guarded by its inhabitants. Out of sight deep down, lives ever, in many a heart the bright hope that in some better time not far remote, the angels of the old farms

will rise again and cause the golden grain to grow and wave once more on the hard gray pastures and in the realm of the thin feeble birch."

However, in spite of the struggle over consolidation the schools did improve in general and many of them were excellent. "One thing I wish to bring to the people of Stafford is the general excellence of their schools in comparison with other localities," said Mr. W.H. Black in the 1897 Report. "I have made a particular study during the last two years of the attainments of children coming from five different towns in Massachusetts . . . and I have come to the conclusion that in no case was any superiority to be seen over the pupils of equal age in our schools."

On October 2, 1899 the town voted 287 to 160 "to abolish all the school districts within its limits and assume and maintain control of the public schools therein."

The struggle was over, the battle was won. Stafford's School System now entered on a new phase of its existence.

This, then is the story of 180 years of Stafford's educational history. It is the story in part only, since many questions must be left unanswered. Records are like bones bleaching in the sun without body or spirit.

However, as one looks backward certain facts stand out. The early settlers were determined on a democratic way of life with educational opportunity for all.

The provisions made sometimes might seem barren and inadequate, yet these were often brought about at a considerable sacrifice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, John, The Works of John Adams, 2nd Pres. of the U.S., 10 vol., Little Brown Boston 1850-56

Archives- - Schools and Colleges, Connecticut State Library, Hartford

Barbour Collection, Arnold Copy, Stafford Vital Records 1719-1850. Conn. State Library. A photostatic copy at the Town Clerk's Office, Stafford Springs

Baker and Tilden, Atlas of Hartford and Tolland Counties, Case, Lockwood and Brainerd, Hartford 1869

Batchelder, Rev. Fredrick L., Historical Sermon preached in 1859. A photostatic copy at the Conn. State Library

Booth, Judge J.H., Judge of Stafford Probate Court
An article in Cole

Brimfield, Historical Celebration of the Town of
Brimfield, Mass., 1876 Published by the Town in
1879

Cole, J.R., History of Tolland County, W.W.Preston Co., 1888. Copy at the Stafford Public Library and at the Conn. Historical Ass'n. Building in Hartford

Colonial Records of Connecticut, Connecticut State Library. Some copies at the Stafford Public Library

Connecticut Magazine, Copyright George C. Atwell, Com Magazine Co., Hartford. Bound copies at the Stafford Public Library

Eaton, William C., and Osborne, H.C., Map of Tolland County, Woodford and Bartlett, Philadelphia 1857
Conn. State Library

Elliot, O.H., First Century of National Existence
O.H.Elliot, Baltimore, 1879. Copy owned by Mrs. A. E. Snow, Stafford Springs

Foxville, District Number 3, East Parish, M.S. records
owned by Mr. Enos Penny, Stafford Springs.

Foxville, Rules and Regulations as Adopted by the District in 1854 Copy owned by Mrs A.E. Snow

Gazetteer of Conn. and R.I., see Pease

Grobel, Rev. Dr. Kendrick, The First Church of Stafford Conn. Published by the Women's Council, Stafford Springs, 1942

Hammond, Chas., The History of Union, Conn.
Price Lee and Adkins Co. New Haven

James, Dr. May Hall, The Educational History of Old Lyme, Conn. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1939

Johnston, Alexander, American Common Wealths, Conn.,
Houghton Mifflin Co., 1888

Land Records, Town Clerk's Office Stafford Springs,
The early Town Meeting records are bound in the same
volumes in which the land records are recorded

Larned, Ellen Douglas, History of Windham County, Conn.
2 vol., Chas. Hamilton, Worcester

New England Primer, Copy loaned by Mrs. C.B.Pinney of
Stafford Springs

Pease, John C. and Niles, John M., A Gazeteer of Conn.
and R.I., W.S.Marsh 1819. Copy loaned by Mrs. Lewis
McLaughlin. Also in the the Conn. State Library

Press, The Stafford Press, a weekly newspaper publ-
ished at Stafford Springs. Founded 1858, at which time
it was published at Palmer, Mass., and called the Staff
ord New Letter, later called the Tolland County Press,
then the Press and now the Stafford Press. A not quite
complete file at their office in Stafford Springs, a
more complete one in the Conn. State Library

Public Acts of Conn., Copies from 1797 to date at the
office of Judge J.H.Reed, a 1784 copy at the Town
Clerk's office, Stafford Springs

Private Laws of Conn. and Special Acts of the General
Assembly. Copies at Judge Reed's and Town Clerk's office

Purcell, Richard Joseph, Conn. in Transition, 1775-1818

Amer. Hist. Ass'n, Washington, D.C., 1918

Reports of the Boards of School Visitors, Printed reports
at the Town Clerk's office 1867 to date.

Reports of the Commissioner of Common Schools of Conn.

Chas. D. Hine Library, State Dept. of Educ. Hartford

Includes copies from 1839 to 1865 after which the State
Board of Educ. came into being

Reports of the Comm. of the School Fund, Chad D. Hine

Library. 1846 copy owned by Mrs. Frank Anderson

Reports of the State Board of Educ., 1865 to date,

Chas D. Hine Library

Register and Manual, State of Conn., Early copies printed
privately are in the vault at the State Library

Rules and Regulations-- See Foxville

Sanford, Elias B., Hist. of Conn., S.S. Scranton and Co.,
Hartford, 1888

Stafford, Hist. of the Town of Stafford, Pub. by the
Stafford Public Library, 1935

Stafford Illustrated, Young William, Young and Cady
Stafford Springs, 1895

Stafford Land Records-- See Land Records

Stafford News Letter-- See Press

Stafford Town Meeting Records, Vol. marked, Vol.B Town Meeting Records. See Land Records

Stafford Vital Statistics -- See Barbour

Steiner, B.C., Hist. of Education in Conn., Bureau of Educ. Circular of Information #2, Gov't. Printing Office, Wash., D.C., 1893

Trumbull, Benjamin, A Complete Hist. of Conn. Civil and Ecclesiastical, From the Emigration of the First Planters From England. 2 vol., Maltby, Goldsmith, and Co., 1818
New Haven

Trumbull, J.Hammond, Memorial History of Hartford, 2 vol. Edward Osgood, Hartford, 1886

Webber, District Number 3, West Parish, District Record Book. Owned by Mrs. Burt Chaffee. Also the Kent Hollow District Record Book

Wood, J. Fredrick, Turnpikes of New England, Marshall Jones and Co. 1919

Young -- See Stafford Illustrated

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express his gratitude to to the many residents of Stafford who aided in the preparation of this paper by loaning documents and records relating to the early history of the town. Special thanks is due Professor W.S.Welles and Professor Rollin H. Barrett who read this paper and offered valuable assistance in its preparation

Approved:

Rollin H. Barrett

U. M. Welles

Date:

May 12, 1945

